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MY BEAUTIFUL HOME

CHARLES BRUCE

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MY BEAUTIFUL HOME!

"Growler takes the Bible, and reads its inspired pages with an intentness which proves he understands the glorious and divine message."
—My Beautiful Home, Page 13.

(Frontispiece.)

MY BEAUTIFUL HOME!

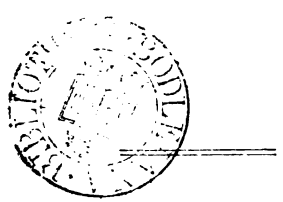
OR,

Lily's Search.

BY

CHARLES BRUCE,

AUTHOR OF "THE STORY OF A MOSS ROSE," "LAME FELIX," ETC.



EDINBURGH:
WILLIAM P. NIMMO.

1871.

230. g. 131

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HOME! HOME AT LAST! 127

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home."

WORDSWORTH.

THE OLD SAILOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE OLD SAILOR.

ON a part of the eastern coast of our island, and near the very edge of the cliff, stood a solitary cottage. It was small, isolated, and had a very cheerless and dreary appearance, more especially in the dull autumn and winter days when no sun was shining, and the sky assumed a dull leaden colour, while the bitter east wind blew sharp and biting all round it. A chance traveller, journeying in that direction on such days, would deem it a very undesirable residence, its forlorn and wretched appearance in broad daylight, naturally suggesting to the mind its still more dreary aspect when darkness veiled the sky and covered the face of the deep.

The cottage was low, possessing no upstair rooms; the walls were built up of mud, clay, stones, and wood, almost realising the description a certain book gives us of the unsubstantial materials with which many people build up their character, which, unlike the cottage, is

supposed to last beyond time through the long ages of eternity. The wood, hay, and stubble, cemented together by the mud and clay, were of sufficient strength to withstand the force of the wind when tempests vexed the sea, and were an effectual protection from the glaring sun of summer or the nipping cold of winter. The winds blew upon these cottage walls, the rain, and sometimes the salt sea spray, washed them, but they bore it all and stood. Character built up with such materials has to endure the fierce winds and storms of temptation, which, even should it successfully resist, afterwards comes the trial by fire.

The roof of this cottage was composed of pieces of wood the sea had cast up from her deeps and thrown upon the shore. They had once formed part of some goodly ship, which one day sailed proudly from harbour, bearing a precious freightage of merchandise and human life. Men and women had leaned over her side, waving sad farewells of kisses and tears to dear ones they were leaving behind, while on the shores of distant lands, to which they were bound, other friends stood ready to welcome them; but before they could reach the far-away shores the cruel sea arose and broke the good ship in pieces, swallowing up her precious freightage of merchandise and life. The builder of the cottage had picked up a few of the good ship's planks, and fashioned them into a roof to keep out the rain; a door had been

made of the same materials, on each side of which was a small square window of glass. No garden surrounded the cottage, neither were any trees growing near it; furze, and coarse grass, and no end of weeds, stretched far away on either side and behind it. The salt spray of the ocean, which the wind carried over the land, prevented much vegetable growth.

No other cottage or hut stood near, but on one side, in the far distance, could be faintly discerned other habitations, belonging to men who pursued their livelihoods on the waters of the great ocean.

In this lonely cottage lived Old Growler. Why he was called Old Growler I could never ascertain; I fancy his far-away neighbours must have given him the name in resentment, because of his lonely habits and life, which, in their eyes and to their apprehensions, savoured of moroseness, and appeared to be a slight thrown upon their own friendliness of disposition and intercourse. Yet he was far from being of an unsociable or grumbling nature; on the contrary, I never knew a more agreeable and cheerful old man when one came to understand his peculiar ways and manner of existence.

In early youth he had left home, and entered as cabin-boy on board a vessel bound for the East Indies, from which position he gradually rose to be mate. For five and fifty years had he sailed the great ocean, and during that time had visited every known and comparatively

unknown portion of the globe; had been tossed about on every sea and in every latitude, and had been subjected to every temptation, danger, and vicissitude of a sailor's lot. Excessive heat in the tropics and severe cold in Polar seas, shipwreck, famine, thirst,—he had endured all in turn, and many times; and now, in his old age, he determined, as he expressed it, "to anchor his old bones" on his native soil, and there await the Great Master's call.

He had no relation or friend in existence: relentless time had swept them all away, leaving no trace behind save a few grassy hillocks in churchyards. But in the course of one of his many voyages he had found that Friend that "sticketh closer than a brother;" so, although he had no one to welcome him ashore with beaming smile, kindly words, and hearty pressure of the hand, he felt he was not alone.

It mattered little to him where he settled to "spin out the remainder of his yarn," so long as it was near his beloved sea, the sight of whose familiar face, with its many changes, he could not forego, or he would pine for it like men in exile for their native land. It had been his home, and companion, and friend for so many years, that it went to his heart like a great sorrow to forsake it when no longer able to battle with its storms; he even felt he should be unable to sleep did he not hear its well-known voice.

The ship in which he had last served had anchored at Yarmouth, where he left her, and travelling along the eastern coast had pitched upon the spot where his cottage now stood, as the place in which to "come to an anchor." He applied, and obtained permission of the lord of the manor to erect himself a place of habitation, which he accomplished with his own hands, unaided by a single creature. Sailors are usually handy fellows, and are never at a loss in cases of emergency; and Old Growler had assisted in erecting too many huts on lonely islands in far-distant seas to be unable to do it in England. When the cottage was finished he slung his hammock, and settled himself down to spend the remainder of his days in peace and retirement. He built himself a boat, by the aid of which he supplied his table with fish, or amused himself by rowing on the water.

He lived the life of a hermit; but, unlike those famous hermits of old, concerning whom we read in old Catholic books, he did not lacerate his flesh with whips, or roll himself on beds of thorns and briars, or walk barefoot over flinty rocks, or suffer himself to remain for years with unwashed body and uncombed hair. The temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which were of constant occurrence to these queer old fellows, did not trouble Growler; he had overcome them years since—and, indeed, the world, as we understand it, had never proved a powerful temptation to him, so he had

not that to contend with. His life was very peaceable and quiet—a recluse, indeed, but one who possessed a very tender heart, in which hatred of his kind found no room to dwell.

No one ever paid him a visit with the sole motive of seeing him himself; but at chance times a benighted traveller would knock at his door soliciting shelter for the night. To all such he gave a hearty welcome, and set before them of his best. And the traveller, were he an intelligent man, able to enter into the peculiar humours of individuals, and possessed the art of drawing them out so as to make them speak of themselves, would find Old Growler, by his bright wood fire, no mean host —on the contrary, one well able to make the hours fly quickly by his wise and entertaining talk. The old man had not been for so many years in daily communion with nature without treasuring up in his heart many wise and beautiful lessons. Besides which he possessed a most marvellous budget of stories, of scenes, incidents, and adventures he had himself witnessed, or in which he had acted a part. Once drawn out of his shell, the fortunate guest had only to sit and listen, and his ears were sure to be charmed, and his mind enlightened by the wise talk of the old man, whose heart was so guileless and simple, but whose experience had been both wide and varied.

These chance guests, however, were very rare. For

the most part Growler lived the whole year round by himself, a silent, self-contained, and contented man, pondering and musing over the past years of his own life, and looking forward to the time when, as he expressed it, "the last entry would have to be made in his log-book; his anchor weighed, and he set sail on the unknown ocean of eternity."

Growler was over seventy years of age. See, there he is down on the sands mooring his little boat—in the cave he himself has hollowed out—for the night; now he shoulders his oars and walks homeward; he bends somewhat, but in his prime he must have been a fine, tall, manly-looking seaman; he is still vigorous, but the years as they have passed over him have taken away the spring and activity of youth, and imparted to his limbs and frame the stiffness of age; his hair is white as snow, and falls in long masses on to his shoulders; the sun, wind, rain, snow, and salt sea spray, storms and tempests, have turned his face to a dark wood colour, so that in appearance it is not wholly unlike a piece of oak; but his eyes are keen and bright still, and possess that peculiar depth of expression eyes acquire which have watched nature in her many moods of sunshine and terror.

Let us enter with Growler into his cottage—he has cut himself some rough steps in the cliff by which he can mount from the beach; slowly he climbs the rugged

staircase; he has been told he was foolish to build his hut so near the edge of the cliff, for that some night the sea would carry cottage, himself, and all away. "Ay! ay!" was his reply, "it will last my time, and, if not, why, I can but die once, and as well that way as any other!" Yet he sometimes half feared the prophecies would be fulfilled, for the sea made continual inroads along that part of the coast, and every year great masses of cliff and earth were carried away by the waves and buried deep down beneath them. Gaining the top of the cliff, Old Growler turns to give one last lingering look across the ocean, as though he would say, "Good night, old friend!" then opens the door of his hut, and enters.

The inside is clean and neat, consisting of one room, the ceiling of which slopes down at the back part. On the right hand as you enter swings his hammock—a standing bedstead was a luxury he could not appreciate —close to which stands a little washhand stand, and a large sea-chest, which had followed him in most of his voyages. On the left hand as you enter is the kitchen; a plain deal shelf runs along the side of the wall, on which is arranged in regular order the various articles of crockery Growler possesses. Above the shelf is a large cupboard answering the purpose of a larder. At the sloping end of the cottage is the fireplace, consisting of a hearthstone, but no grate; a bright, cheerful fire is blazing on the hearth, over which is suspended the tea-

kettle. In front of the fire stands a deal table, and close by an arm-chair of huge dimensions; a couple of rough stools on the opposite side of the hearth completes the furniture of the cottage, with the exception of various curiosities which adorn the walls, and which Growler had picked up in the course of his wanderings in foreign lands, and a large family Bible, which lay on a little shelf within easy reach of the old man when seated in his chair. No curtains covered the windows, for Growler said that men far out at sea, keeping their solitary watch, loved to see the light gleaming from cottage windows, as it gave them sweet thoughts of home and loved ones.

Standing his oars up in one corner of the room with some fishing tackle, Growler busies himself with preparing tea, of which he is exceedingly fond. Tea over, he piles a few pieces of wood on the fire, lights his short black pipe, which he smokes with an exquisite sense of enjoyment, takes the Bible down from the shelf, opens and reads its inspired pages with an intentness which proves he understands the glorious and Divine message they convey. And, indeed, if we were to turn over the leaves of his large Bible we should find they had been well used, and that many of the precious promises, which have been a source of comfort and hope to many myriads of suffering human hearts, have been underlined with ink, more especially those promises which refer to old age, such as:—

"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him and I am helped."

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

"And even to your old age I am He; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you."

"Cast me not off in old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth me."

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

THE STORM.

CHAPTER II.

THE STORM.

SUMMER with its glory, and wealth of beauty and life had passed away; autumn, with its golden harvest of ripened grain and fruit followed fast on the retreating footsteps of summer, strewing the path with faded leaves which rustled mournfully as the wind whirled them hither and thither, as though in very spite, and with a spirit of revenge, because in the bygone spring it could not woo them from the trees. November had come with its dreary vapour and fog, obscuring land and sea with its moist curtain, and falling on the heart of man with a sense of heaviness he tried in vain to resist.

Old Growler had secured his boat early in the afternoon, as the appearance of the sky gave promise of "dirty weather," and as the short period of twilight faded into darkness the wind began to rise, and the night became tempestuous. The rain fell fast, pattering loudly against the two small windows of the cottage;

for a few minutes it would cease, to allow the wind to gather fresh violence, and force its way through every crevice into the cottage, making the flame of the solitary candle, by the light of which Growler was reading, flicker to and fro, and at times even be in danger of total extinction; while the door rattled and shook as the successive blasts hurled themselves against it, as though determined, spite of all obstacles, to force an entrance. Once Growler had arisen from his chair fearing such would be the result did he not secure the door by additional fastenings.

The old man continued calmly smoking his pipe, now reading and now watching the wreaths of smoke curl gracefully above the bowl, or quickly disperse as the searching wind entered. The noise and fury of the tempest, the howling of the wind, and the hoarse roaring of the sea as it beat against the cliffs, sent his thoughts back to times and scenes when he himself had been exposed and had to do battle in such storms—times when the hours of a single night had been more effectual in turning the hair grey than years of peaceful days. But it was not long that his thoughts were permitted to return to the past, for the sudden report of a gun, swept to the leeward by the force of the gale, causing the cottage to vibrate for a moment by the concussion, made Old Growler start to his feet in such haste as to drop his pipe from between his lips as

he exclaimed, "God have mercy! there's a vessel ashore!"

Lifting the oaken bar, and removing the other fastenings, Growler prepared to leave his cottage to see if help could be given to the luckless crew of the ill-fated vessel. The door, which faced seaward, was blown open with violence, and showers of rain and hail came sweeping into the cottage and into Growler's face. It was with extreme difficulty he managed to reclose and secure the door, after making his exit into the darkness and storm.

But a few short weeks before how beautiful and calm had appeared the sea, as the waves fell gently on the sands, lighted up by the last lingering rays of the setting sun, or beneath the light of quiet stars. Now all was changed.

As Growler made his way to the edge of the cliff the rain and spray dashed in his face, while his ears were deafened by the roaring of the sea and the howling of the wind, which last lifted his straw hat from off his head, carrying it far away inland, so that his long white hair streamed out behind in disordered masses. The night was so intensely dark that he could gain no glimpse of the vessel whose gun informed him of her danger, as by the report he conjectured she must be close on shore. Approaching as near to the edge of the cliff as he dared with safety, and kneeling down, the

better to withstand the force of the tempest, he peered anxiously across the sea, if haply he might discern the ill-fated ship. While thus employed, and listening eagerly for the report of another gun that he might more accurately judge in what perilous position she was placed, he fancied he heard voices; the sounds were but faintly borne to his ear, and yet they sounded like voices pitched in their highest key. Placing his two hands to his mouth, so as to form a kind of trumpet, he shouted in the full compass of his voice, "Hilloa! who's there?"

"Is that you, Growler?" came the answer, sounding much nearer than before.

Presently five or six men from the distant fishing village clustered round him, pointing out to sea, gesticulating, and shouting there was a vessel ashore somewhere about there.

"Yes, I know," shouted Growler, in reply, "but I can't see a single spar; it's too dark."

"She must be close on shore, if she's not already struck," said one of the men.

"Then God have mercy on their souls, for her crew are beyond the possibility of help!" exclaimed another, as he endeavoured to pierce the darkness.

"If I only knew where she was, one might tell with more certainty," observed Growler.

At that moment a second gun was fired by the crew of the ill-fated ship, and its report conveyed to the ears

of the experienced fishermen the hopelessness of her position.

"She's doomed," shouted one, "nothing can save her!"

"Let's make our way to the beach, lads," said Growler; "when she breaks some unfortunate creature or other may be washed ashore."

Slowly forcing their way, with heads bent, and hand clasped in hand, the better to resist the fury of the wind, the men made their way to a part of the cliff which gradually sloped down to the sands, as it was impossible to take advantage of Growler's staircase—all would have been hurled from it by the violence of the storm.

As they arrived on the sands another gun was fired, which, although heard by the men, only served to confirm their opinion respecting the hopelessness of her position.

"Is it impossible to help the poor things?" shouted Growler in the ear of one standing by his side.

Shaking his head the man replied, "No boat can live in such a sea; leastways I don't think as how it could."

"The only thing that can be done is to light a fire, so that if any poor fellow is trying to make for shore he may know where to steer," said one.

"There are no means of kindling one here," replied Growler; "besides I heaped a lot of wood on my fire

before I came out, and I take it that makes a pretty glow."

Looking up in the direction of the cottage the men saw the windows were all ablaze with light.

"Come, lads," continued Growler, "I can't stand here and know that my fellow creatures are perishing, and yet make no effort to save them. Let's launch the boat."

"Ay, ay, Growler! lead on!" shouted the men in reply, for the dwellers on our coast, the toilers on the sea, are ever ready to risk limb and life endeavouring to save others from a watery grave.

Away they all hurried to where Growler kept his boat, himself taking the lead. Where is the stiffness of his limbs now? And the old man! has he vanished, and is that another standing in his place? No, it is Old Growler still; but how changed! Youth, with its spring, and vigour, and activity seems to have returned to the old man. Age is shaken off as men shake off a garment, and the decaying embers of his strength have received new life! See how firmly he steps over the sand; how vigorously he aids in dragging the boat from her hiding-place down to the sea and its cruel waves! Now comes the tug of war: upright and bold as a lion he stands, issuing his commands in a voice ringing loud and clear above the fury of the storm. The boat is launched; through the boiling surf it plunges; in spring

the men, two to an oar, Growler standing firm and fearless at the tiller. But the sea and the wild wind are mightier than man's strength—who shall contend with their fury? The boat has but ridden successfully over the crest of a few waves when a mighty sea overwhelms it, dashing it back, and hurling the men into the cruel water.

"Never mind, lads, try again!" shouts Growler, struggling to the beach, wringing the water from his long hair.

And try again, and yet again, did these brave men, but with no better success, until, with broken oars and spent strength, they are compelled to relinquish their heroic efforts.

"We can do no more," said one of the men; "that last wave was a settler, and nearly broke my back as well as the oars."

"Yes; we've done our utmost, and none can do more. They must all perish, everything is against them, unless He in whose hands are the winds and the waves stretch forth an arm to save."

No gun had been fired for some time, and the group of fishermen concluded from this circumstance that the force of the waves had broken the vessel in pieces. They still lingered on the sands, hoping against hope that some poor creature might float within the compass of their aid. Time, however, went on, but nothing was

either heard or seen, that could lead to the hope that even one poor soul had survived the wreck. At length, feeling all was over, the men were reluctantly turning away to seek the shelter of their several homes, when their progress was arrested by Growler shouting—"What's that yonder, there? Quick, lads, a hand-rope."

Hand clasped in hand, they ran out into the sea, the angry waves curling round, and threatening to beat the life out of one and all, until Growler was able to clutch the object which had attracted his attention, as it appeared dark amid the white foam. Safely hauled on to the beach they found it to be a hencoop, while lashed securely to the top was the body of a little girl. She seemed quite dead—so at least the fishermen thought as they noticed her pale cheeks and cut the ropes by which she was bound.

"This way, lads; there may be a spark of life in her, and warmth will bring it out," said Growler, taking the little body in his arms and hurrying in the direction of his cottage.

The men quickly followed in his footsteps, all being eager to see what the little stranger was like, and ascertain whether life was really extinct.

It was not so easy climbing the cliff as it had been to descend, consequently their upward progress was slow, and some little time elapsed ere Growler, with the child

held fast in his arms, reached the cottage with its cheerful light and warmth.

"Now, lads, just take the bedding from my hammock and lay it down here by the fire, while I take off her wet clothes. Poor little creature, how pretty she is! What a storm to live through!"

The bedding was laid by the fire, while, with care and tenderness of touch, Growler divested the child of her wet garments. Thank God! rough hands can be very gentle in their touch when the heart which guides them is tender with human love and kindness.

Very affecting and pathetic the little creature looked, lying there before the blazing fire, with her long, damp, golden hair spread over the pillow, and her nerveless limbs resting helplessly on the bed. Some of the men, who had little ones at home, felt a strange sort of choking sensation in their throat as they gazed at the pallid face; a tear glittered in many an eye unaccustomed to such briny drops. Meantime Growler gently chafed the cold limbs, while one of the fishermen, under his directions, concocted a warm drink with hot water, wine, and sugar, a spoonful of which was poured into the child's mouth. Intently the group of men awaited the result of their experiment. For a few moments no result appeared to be produced, then a faint colour was seen to flush the little cheeks, and the little bosom heaved.

"Thank God! she lives," said Growler, reverently.

For a little time the breath came freer and at shorter intervals; then one hand was slightly stirred, finally a pair of dark blue eyes were opened, and looked up into the rough, but kindly faces of the fishermen who were watching her; no light of recognition dawned in them, and they were quickly closed again. Gently and tenderly, a whole wealth of love shining in his eyes, did Growler dry the soft silken hair, and cover the snow-white limbs, upon which the little stranger fell into a deep and peaceful sleep.

"I think she 'll do now, lads."

"Yes, yes, all right now; and we 'll be off home, and let the little 'un sleep. We 'll look you up in the morning, Growler. Good night."

Away the men went, leaving Growler to watch by the side of the young life the old ocean had cast at his feet. Opening his Bible, he read in a low voice, "*They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: these see the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths; their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.*" When he had read thus far he was aroused by a sweet, plaintive voice, saying, "WHERE IS MY BEAUTIFUL HOME?"

WHAT THE SEA BROUGHT OLD GROWLER.

CHAPTER III.

WHAT THE SEA HAD BROUGHT OLD GROWLER.

" HERE is my beautiful home?"

Startled at the simple yet strange question, Old Growler looked down into the face of the little golden-haired stranger, whose eyes were gazing up earnestly at his rugged and weather-beaten features. She had awoke from her peaceful sleep, and made her inquiry with that sweet, wistful gravity children sometimes assume, as though the shadow of after sorrow swept across the face, changing the light of the eyes into a seriousness more becoming to maturer years and experience—but which maturer years and experience does not always acquire—as though a soul sat behind the two windows having an inkling of what a sorrowful affair life is at best. The old seaman was puzzled, and, being unable for the moment to answer the query, gazed down at the little face in silence.

Finding the old man did not reply, the child raised herself from her impromptu bed, and, leaning on one

elbow, looked searchingly round the room, examining each piece of furniture which the light of the candle illumined, gazing fixedly into dusky and obscure corners where the light did not penetrate, as though she expected to see them open out into long vistas of brightness leading to the beautiful home concerning which she had inquired. Her search ended, she sunk back again with a sigh on to her couch, her eyes returning to Growler's face, while her lips again shaped the question, "*Where is my beautiful home?*"

"Your beautiful home, darling! and did you have a beautiful home?" said Growler, softening, as far as it was possible, the gruffness of his voice into those soothing tones which age adopts when speaking to childhood of things they wish for and cannot have.

"Of course I had a beautiful home," said the little creature, apparently surprised that any one should question the truthfulness of what to herself was a mere matter of fact. "Of course I had a beautiful home! Where is it?"

Growler, very much perplexed what to answer, contented himself with slowly shaking his head from side to side, evidently intimating he could not tell where the beautiful home was.

"How came I here?"

"The sea brought you, little one."

"The sea? What, without my knowing it?"

Here was a fresh surprise for Old Growler, and perplexing as well. How was he to answer such questions? He was not much accustomed to children, or he would have known that they sometimes ask questions that the wisest man would find it difficult to answer, much more a simple old seaman like himself. So, like many another has done in similar circumstances, he again shook his head, suggesting the propriety of his little charge composing herself to sleep. She made no demur at the proposition, but instead, turned her face to the fire, and, placing one delicate little hand beneath her cheek, closed her eyes. As the long silken lashes fell upon the pale cheeks, Growler thought he had never before seen a face which appeared at once so beautiful and so innocent. Years had not imprinted their traces there; neither had sorrow nor care left their ineffaceable marks. As it gradually sunk into repose, and the light of the flames from the wood fire flickered across it, it seemed like some rare piece of sculpture which a subtle magician was just kindling into life, and in the process had tangled and disordered the masses of golden hair.

When the cold, dreary light of the November morning, which succeeded the storm, had rolled away the darkness of night—which it was a long time in doing, and did very ineffectually, for as the darkness slowly vanished it left little clouds and streaks of blackness behind, which lingered in the sky throughout the day, or mingling with

the light, totally absorbed all the brightness the morning might have brought forth from its chambers of light—the sea was still swollen and angry, but the winds had retired to their caves to gather fresh strength and fury.

The old seaman had snatched a few hours of sleep, for age cannot do without its rest; but when day dawned he arose, and, replenishing the fire, turned to his little guest, whom he found intently watching all his movements; but no sooner did she perceive that she was observed than she said—"I should like to get up!"

"And so my darling shall," said Growler, softening his rugged features into a winsome smile, which called up an answering one in the face of the child, not a merry smile full of sunshine and laughter, but quiet, and with a reserve of seriousness which appeared to open up a depth of mystic meaning in her large and thoughtful eyes.

"But how can I? I have no clothes."

"What an old loggerhead I am; I forgot, yours are not dry; I must look and see if I have not something here that will do."

And lifting the lid of his chest he rummaged among its contents, but could find nothing more suitable for the beautiful little creature, than one of his own blue Guernsey shirts, in which he enveloped her, observing that it would do for the present with a few reefs taken in, but which made the child appear more like an animated

monster blue bag, such as washerwomen use to give a tint of colour to their linen.

"Now then, darling, we will have breakfast;" which Growler soon prepared, and, placing one of his rough stools on the seat of his large arm chair, he seated the child thereon, setting before her a steaming and fragrant cup of coffee, with a slice of bread and butter. Helping himself to a similar cup of coffee and slice of bread, the old man, raising his hands and eyes to heaven, implored a blessing on their humble meal.

The child ate her bread and drank her coffee in silence, with a thoughtful expression in the face, suggesting the probability of her mind being actively employed pondering over some problem which was not quite clear to her apprehension.

At length, regarding Growler very attentively as he sat on the opposite side of the table enjoying his food and wondering who the child was, she said, "Will you tell me what your name is?"

"Why, little lady, I'm called Old Growler!"

"Old Growler! Do you growl, then?"

"Well, sometimes I'm taken all aback and growl a bit, but nothing to speak of."

"You won't growl at me, will you?"

"No! no! I arn't quite such a bear! I shall love you so much that I shall only speak tender words to you."

"That will be very pleasant; but if I know you love

me, I shan't mind you growling sometimes, as I shall know you do not mean anything bad or unkind; I don't think I shall growl at you, because I don't know how; so we shall be good friends, shall we not?"

"Certainly, little lady," said Growler, tickled beyond measure at the bare idea of those sweet pretty lips fashioning themselves into a growl.

"You must not call me 'little lady,' my name is Lily; and I will trouble you for another cup of your nice coffee, and a slice more of your bread and butter; but do not cut it so thick, I am unaccustomed to such thick slices."

This was all said very seriously, with the air and voice of one accustomed to have her slightest wish observed.

"Will Lily tell me in what ship it was she sailed across the sea?" said Growler.

"That is what I don't understand, Old Growler; I do not recollect sailing in a ship," answered Lily.

"Then where was your beautiful home, dear?"

"I do not know where it was, I wish I did, it troubles me; I thought perhaps you could tell me where my beautiful home was." And the large eyes gazed wistfully at him; but Growler only shook his head, too surprised at all he heard to speak.

"Am I to live with you, Growler, until I find my home?"

"Yes, darling, if no one claims you; I should like

such a pretty flower as you to cling to my battered old trunk; I will try and shield you from all rough winds, and carry you in my arms like people carry roses in the bosom of their dress."

"Yes, I think I shall love you, Growler; your eyes are full of softness. How did you say I came here?"

"In a big ship, but the storm knocked the life out of her." Sailors love to speak of vessels as beings instinct with life.

"I don't remember," said Lily, shaking her head. Planting her dimpled elbow on the table, and resting her cheek on the palm of her hand, she continued slowly and thoughtfully—"I wish I knew all about it, Old Growler; but, try all I can, I can only think a little of my beautiful home. I feel strange and changed; I seem to have something weighing heavily upon me—something I should like to take off, but don't know how." Sighing wearily she resumed her breakfast.

Growler, not knowing what to say, or indeed what she meant, suggested that in all probability it was the Guernsey shirt which made her feel uncomfortable. Lily would not allow this for a moment, but insisted it was something else.

By the time breakfast was finished, and the things put carefully away, a batch of visitors arrived from the far-away fishing village, consisting of the men who had assisted Growler on the preceding night, accompanied

by their wives and two or three children, who, clinging to the skirts of their mothers' dress, peeped slily out at the stranger, apparently half doubtful of the nature of the little creature in her strange attire.

Lily regarded the visitors very attentively, not attempting to speak until Growler, pointing to the men, told her it was by their aid she was rescued from the waves of the cruel sea. She then went up to them, and, with a sweet voice, and in well-chosen words, thanked them for preserving her life. The rough, brown-faced, coarsely-clad, yet kindly-hearted fishermen huddled themselves together, apparently much confused at receiving the little lady's thanks for what they regarded as a very small service.

"No, no," said one, scratching his head, "it warn't much, were it, Jim? Only a hand or two, yer know."

"Aye, aye, that's all, lassie; we'd do it again any time, yer know, it's nothing to speak of."

The motherly instincts and sympathies of the women yearned over the child, which the old ocean had flung like a seaweed on to their coast; they longed to gather the little creature to their warm, motherly bosoms, and smother her with kisses, and murmur a whole dictionary of endearing words—with which nature supplies every mother—over her; words which sound simple and strange, but conveying a world of loving tenderness and affection in the tone with which they are uttered. They knelt down beside her, kissing her soft cheeks, caress-

"'Would you like me to be your mother?' said the woman, folding her to her bosom."—MY BEAUTIFUL HOME, Page 33.

ing her silken hair, and looking lovingly into the large blue eyes, which were wonderingly observing them, as though unaccustomed to the sight of such humble individuals.

"And where is my pretty one's mother?" inquired one.

"I have no mother," replied Lily, quietly.

"Drowned!" whispered one of the men, hoarsely, and behind the back of his hand to his mate, who nodded an acquiescent reply.

"No mother, darling! Would you like me to be your mother? A little mouth like yours won't make much difference," said the woman, folding her to her bosom. She was a hard-featured woman, but her eyes were filled with the light of human love.

"Thank you; you are very kind, but I think I will live with Old Growler," said Lily, putting her arms 'round the good woman's neck, and softening her refusal by a kiss.

"But Growler won't be able to do for you."

"Yes, I think he will," said Lily, appealing to him with a glance to confirm her statement, which he did with much alacrity, saying, provided the little one was willing, and no one came to claim her, she should live with him.

"But how will you fend for her?" inquired the woman.

"Oh, we shall manage—shan't we, little one?'

"Yes, I think so, Growler."

No arguments could induce the old man and the child to alter their determination, and after some little time the visitors left, the women promising to look out a few articles of clothing for Lily.

LILY.

CHAPTER IV.

LILY.

SEVERAL weeks elapsed before Growler was left in quiet possession of his young charge. His far-away neighbours, either from a spirit of curiosity, or because they deemed it necessary to keep an eye upon the child, paid him many and frequent visits, so that at first scarcely a day passed without two or three making their appearance at the cottage. The men said little, and what they did say was in reference to the lost vessel, to wonder where she came from, and what had been her name. The women, however, who honoured the cottage with a visit, came fully charged with sage maxims and advice concerning how the child was to be treated, and allowed to grow up into womanhood, all of which they enforced with scraps of experience from their own or a friend's history. This did not arise solely from the fact that women deem themselves oracles where the management of children are concerned, but the springs and fountains of their motherly love were stirred and agitated on behalf of the little creature dependent upon a stranger's love. They had children of their own, and

knew how they should feel were one of them to experience the same fate as that which had befallen Lily—lose father's and mother's care, and be thrown helpless among strangers, depending upon their charity for the performance of those actions a mother does from love.

Growler paid great attention to all that was said, by which means he gained the good-will of the women, and treasured up in his memory many a piece of sage matronly wisdom for future use, should occasion ever require its being put into practice. By degrees, however, these visits grew less and less frequent, until they ceased altogether, and the old seaman and the child lived in undisturbed retirement.

Meantime a strong attachment had sprung up between them. Old Growler made a very warm place for Lily in his heart, where she nestled contentedly. He had never had so beautiful a little creature to love before, and his affections twined round her very firmly. A kind of beauty seemed to have entered into his life, a new interest for which to live. Those human affections for our kind, which all hearts possess, and which usually centre themselves on some one object, had lain dormant in Growler's bosom; and now in his old age, when he was fast approaching the unknown ocean of eternity, they awoke into life and activity to cluster round a wee, frail piece of humanity, that chance, or rather providence, thrown into his arms.

As they became better acquainted and more familiar with each other, Lily revealed a thousand charms and graces of manner and speech which delighted the old sailor, bringing many a merry twinkle to his eyes, and many a thought to his mind as to whom the child belonged. That she came of a high race he felt sure, for she possessed all the ways and manners of one who had been born amid the surroundings of wealth and high station. No fragment of the wreck save a few planks had been washed ashore, and these gave no sign or token as to the name of the ship or of any of her passengers; the remorseless sea had swallowed up all knowledge, and guarded it with jealous care. The clothes the child wore when rescued carried out the illusion—if illusion—of Lily being born of a noble house, for the texture and material were extremely fine and of the best quality. To all questions Growler put to her concerning her home and parents she answered vaguely; what alone clung to her memory was the fact that she once had a beautiful home. Here all knowledge ceased, the great shock she had experienced during the shipwreck, seemed to have totally obliterated all her past experience, or so effaced it that it revealed itself in disjointed fragments of facts, fancies, wafts of music and song.

Lily was an extremely beautiful child, possessing that rare kind of spiritual beauty which makes the heart sigh as the eyes behold it; so delicately frail does it appear

that fancy clings to the belief that it is a flower transplanted from another garden than that of earth, and needs the warm sunshine of love in which to grow and flourish. Her cheeks were pale as the pearl; summer seemed to have given them none of its wealth of warmth and colour, and infused into them none of its tropical glory of life; if they ever had glowed with the beauty of the rose, the salt sea had washed it all away; but the paleness was not that arising from ill health or defective organisation, but on the contrary was as that of the lily, lovely of its kind, bearing the stamp of thought, and the apparent impress of a hand hid away in the clouds. Her mouth was sweetness itself, made only to be kissed, a half-opened bud tinged with colour. But her eyes, which gave a character to the whole face, were the most noticeable feature; they were large, and of a deep violet blue, fringed with long lashes. Fancy would have it, that the eyes had looked so long and so frequently up into the blue depths of the heavens that some of their colour and mystic depth had fallen into them. Be that as it may, certainly a wonderful light shone in them, as though a pure and sinless soul, burdened with thought and feeling, sat behind and looked out upon the world, startled at finding itself in a place with which it was not familiar, having been moulded and fashioned in a world where beauty reigned without deformity.

The soul gazing out of those serious eyes imparted a

different, and superior, kind of loveliness than that arising from mere perfection of feature and colour; it seemed almost a realisation of the old pagan idea of beauty having its throne in the soul, whence it imparted its radiance to every feature and limb of the body. This appeared eminently so with Lily; and there also seemed a beauty which had been derived from, and was in harmony with, the motions and music of nature; it seemed as though she had leaned

> "Her ear in many a secret place,
> Where rivulets dance their wayward round
> And beauty born of murmuring sound
> Had passed into her face."

The whole realized the poet's description when he says—

> "A spirit look was in her face,
> That shadow'd a miraculous range
> Of meanings ever rich and strange."

Then, too, the form of the child was of so perfect and harmonious a character that it would have satisfied the critical eye of the sculptor or artist. It seemed to have been wrought by celestial strains of harmony, every motion, posture, and repose of the body being full of grace and beauty. Perhaps Nature had done for her what she said she would do for Wordsworth's "Lucy"—

> "The floating clouds their state shall lend
> To her; for her the willow bend;
> Nor shall she fail to see,
> Even in the motions of the storm,
> Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
> By silent sympathy."

Yet it was not so. All the beauty Lily possessed, with her waves of hair like the early beams of the morning sun, was the glory she had brought with her from her lost and beautiful home, the indications of a higher and purer life; or how was it that at times she seemed wrapt up as in a garment of repose, and in silence deeper than the

> "Silence that is in the starry sky,
> The sleep that is among the lonely hills,"

during which her soul seemed to have gone on a visit to the beautiful home she so dimly remembered, but for which she continually sighed?

The motions, voice, and speech of the child conveyed the idea that her lost home had been one of regal beauty and loveliness. At times this thought impressed the simple mind of Growler with a degree of awe, causing him to approach and address the child with a reverence, the depth of which he himself was unconscious.

By the time winter had departed with its cold and snow, and spring came covering the earth with a green mantle, and strewing its path with flowers, Lily had become the inseparable companion of the old sailor, following him wheresoever he went, and attending him in all his occupations.

The winter months had been mostly passed seated by the cheerful wood fire, for the child was too delicate to dare with impunity the cold, bleak winds. During the

long evenings Growler would amuse her with narratives of his life and experiences at sea, to which the child would listen seated by his side, with her head resting on one of his knees, her eyes fixed dreamily upon the fire, watching the flames as they flickered and darted up the chimney. Although she enjoyed the stories of ocean life, she much preferred hearing her kind protector read from his large Bible; the simplicity, beauty, and wonderful pathos of the Saviour's life found a ready echo of sympathy and appreciation in her own heart; His many words and actions of love, His kindness to the poor, the beautiful gentleness with which He forgave the wrong-doing of the sinner, and dried the mourner's tears; and the overflowing tenderness with which He loved little children, touched the deep fountains of feeling in her own nature, sometimes even making the tears gather like dew into her eyes. She said she must have seen such goodness herself somewhere, but she could not say where unless it was in her beautiful home.

Sometimes in the gloaming, when the shadows from the firelight danced upon the walls, she would speak of her mysteriously lost home, and endeavour to convey to the mind of Growler an idea of its manifold beauties,—beauties she herself but vaguely remembered. At times she would burst out with a fragment of song she had learnt there, and which still lingered in her memory; but as spring advanced, its loveliness seemed

to awaken fresh memories of the beauty of her lost home.

Now spring had indeed come, breaking through the icy bands of winter, with its cheerfulness, warmth, and balmy airs, and the birds had returned to make music in the land, and the dull, heavy clouds of winter were chased away by the sun, in whose rising and setting beams the sea sparkled and laughed, breaking into thousands of dimpled smiles. Lily and Growler wandered away from the cottage, indulging in delightful rambles along the coast, or inland among green lanes. Early in the morning the boat would be unmoored and launched upon the sea, and they would skim across waves all ablaze with golden glory, the fresh breeze lifting the curls from Lily's head, and fanning her cheeks until a faint tinge of colour, delicate as the blush on a rose leaf, would kindle in her cheeks, while her eyes would reflect the brightness of the sun, and her little throat swell as she sang wafts and fragments of song.

On one such occasion she burst out into the longest song Growler had ever heard her sing, and which she afterwards told him she suddenly remembered to have learnt in her beautiful home.

Suns rise on my home of beauty,
  Stars shine in the silent night;
Calm moons through the heavens moving,
  With their beams of silver bright,
On my home, the home of beauty,
  Shed their soft and mystic light.

By my home, the home of beauty,
Sweetly flow the rushing streams,
Making soft melodious music,
Such as children hear in dreams;
Bending o'er, as though to listen,
Tall trees wave their leafy screens.

Birds sing round my home of beauty,
When the dew is on the grass;
When the sky is flushed with sunbeam,
And the merry songsters pass,
Flowers wake to hear the music,
Sweetest voice can ne'er surpass.

In my home, the home of beauty,
I am happy all the day,
Discontent, and care, and trouble,
By love's smiles are chased away;
In my home, the home of beauty,
Want and misery dare not stay.

In my home, the home of beauty,
(Home that all must long to gain)
Tears are never shed in secret,
Hearts are never sore with pain;
Blessed peace and rest awaken
Love's Divine, immortal strain.

The sweet, clear, thrilling tones of the child's voice, as they floated along the sea, sounded wonderfully pleasant to the old man's ears, and ere the first verse had ended he rested upon his oars to listen, and to watch the quick-changing emotions pass over the face of the little singer, as, with eyes gazing into the hazy distance, she carolled her song.

Sometimes when the day had ended, and darkness fell over sea and land, and stars shone in the sky, the boat would again be launched, and Lily, wrapped in one of the old sailor's pilot coats, would lie on the thwarts

gazing up into the mystic depths of the dark, silent sky, listening to the distant waves as they fell gently on the sands of the shore; she exhibited no inclination to sing at these times, the awful stillness of the night seemed to fall upon her like a garment. Once Growler inquired of what she was thinking.

"My beautiful home," she replied.

"Does my dear one think of it more in the night than in day?"

"Yes, for I hear voices telling me I must go and search for it."

"But where can my Lily go?"

"I cannot say, but the home must be somewhere, and the voices say 'Come, come, come and search!' And each time they sound more earnest."

"But my little flower must not search alone."

"Well, I am not sure of that, but something in my heart says I must, and that if others are seeking for it, each one must seek for it alone."

On one occasion the child awoke Growler in the night and inquired whether he kept fairies in the room, for she heard them inviting her to arise and follow them out into the darkness; she also said she heard voices outside urging her to plunge with them into the blue sea and there she would find her beautiful home; that night after night their voices were continually sounding in her ears; she thought that the darkness must be

peopled with beings they could not see, some of whom must have transferred her from her beautiful home into that of Growler's, for she recognised tones which sounded familiar. Growler quieted her with soothing words and tender caressing phrases until she fell asleep; but he pondered over what she had said and treasured her words up in his heart.

CHAPTER V.

THE ENCHANTED ISLAND.

THERE was one spot along the coast which had become a favourite resort of Lily and Old Growler during the bright spring days and early summer evenings. This was the remains of an ancient churchyard. Some few years before, part of the ruins of a church had existed, but the remorseless waves had washed them away. Part of the graveyard which had surrounded the church still remained, growing, however, gradually less every year. Three or four headstones were still standing, but so near the edge of the cliff that they seemed eager to be gone after their companions, standing ready to topple over on the first summons the winds and the sea made; no names could be traced on either of the headstones, the wind and the salt sea had beaten them all out.

Fancy often wondered how those who had been buried such a long, long time ago liked being carried out to sea in that fashion, after having died believing they

should rest beneath the shadow of the church in which they had worshipped until the last trumpet should arouse them from their slumber. Yet, as Old Growler once remarked to Lily, "it could make no difference in the end—for do we not read that the '*sea also shall give up her dead?*'—and it must be as pleasant to lie beneath the cool waves as to be buried in the black, damp earth."

This melancholy spot seemed to possess peculiar attractions for Lily, who, accompanied by the old seaman, would wind her way early in the morning or evening to the place of forgotten graves, and there sit and talk, or watch the sun as he shed his last beams over land and sea, and the sea-gulls as they winged their way to their nests; lingering on in the tremulous twilight until the first star peeped out from the darkening blue of the sky. Sometimes the old sailor would carry his large Bible with him, and in the quiet calm of the holy time would read to his young companion words which seemed peculiarly adapted for the solemn place and time.

On the morning following the night Lily had inquired concerning the mysterious voices, they set out together to visit their accustomed place of resort. It was a beautiful morning in early summer. The sea, laughing in the light of the sun, fell gently on the sands; here and there the white wing of a sea-bird skimmed along the wave, or gleamed for a moment as the bird darted quickly on its prey; light, fleecy clouds studded the

sky, and high up from their depth the song of a lark floated downward to the ear; the furze was out in bloom, while the coarse grass was enamelled with daisies.

Slowly the old man and his youthful companion walked along the cliff, enjoying the beauty and freshness of the morning, the child stopping occasionally to pluck a flower. Children love flowers with a strong, unfailing love, they are sources of infinite pleasure to them; to them they confide all their little troubles and griefs, speaking to them as though they were instinct with life. Flowers are ministering spirits to children, and little dwellers in great cities are shut out from one of the great blessings of childhood in being deprived of the ministrations of flowers.

Seated in their usual place, Old Growler said, "Well, Lily, are the voices all gone?"

"Yes, they are still now; but everything I see seems to speak to me of my lost home; these flowers I have plucked seem to say they are but showdows of those that grow in the gardens of my beautiful home; that bird up there, which is singing so sweetly, its song seems but the echo of those which are constantly heard round my home; there the trees are greener, the sky is more blue, and filled with brighter and larger stars; the winds there are always soft and gentle, never rough and angry as they are here."

"You remind me, Lily," said Growler, looking

"Children love flowers with a strong, unfailing love."—My Beautiful Home, Page 48.

thoughtfully at the child, "you remind me of a man I once knew in the West Indies, who was always talking about a wonderful island he had once seen, and inquiring of all whom he met whether they had ever seen it, and could inform him which way to steer, so that he might gain its shores."

"Did he ever find it?" inquired Lily.

"I can't say as how he ever did, but he said he could never rest until he had done so, and would spend his life in the search."

"Poor man! Tell me all about it, Growler."

"What, how he came first of all to visit the island?"

"Yes, I should much like to hear."

"Well, you see, I was knocking about, some years ago, in a little trading craft among the keys and islands of the West Indies. I was mate, and among the crew was a dark-complexioned, Spanish-looking fellow, with large, dark eyes, with a wild, restless, yet melancholy light in them. Some said he had once had a sunstroke, and was a little gone in the brain; be that as it may, he was a good seaman, although somewhat strange.

"But the strangest thing about him was his incessant talk concerning a wonderful island he was searching for; he inquired of every man of the crew whether they knew of this island, which he called '*Happy Island*,' and every vessel with which we spoke, he hailed the crew as to whether they could tell him in what latitude and longitude

was the '*Happy Island.*' No one knew of such an island, but they could mention a number where the man *might* be happy.

"In spite of all the rebuffs which the inquiry elicited, the man still persevered, and at last became known among the West Indian traders as '*Old Happy Island.*' As soon as ever it was light he would skim up to the crosstrees and scan the horizon with his glass to see if the island was in sight; the same at evening, while he remained in a fever all night lest the vessel should pass it in the darkness.

"One beautiful night, when we lay becalmed, and it was my watch on deck, where I had been slowly pacing to and fro, looking up at the large, brilliant lights of the wonderful Southern Cross, and repeating to myself the Psalm where it says, 'When I consider the heavens, the work of Thy fingers,' I saw the fellow descending the ratlins. Hailing him to draw near, I questioned him concerning his island, desiring him, if he had no objection, to tell me about the visit he had once paid it. Poor fellow! he was only too glad to speak about the fancy which haunted him.

"He told me that several years ago the vessel to which he belonged, had been driven out of her course by a violent storm, while they were sailing the same seas in which he then found himself; no one knew the position of the ship, so a careful watch was kept lest they might

strike on some hidden sandbank or sunken rock. One night, while slowly pacing the deck, thinking of home and distant friends, and wondering where the ship had been driven, he suddenly heard the strains of some wonderful song, which came floating to his ears over the waters. It sounded as though chanted by innumerable sweet voices, accompanied by silver instruments of music.

"Startled at what he heard, he looked in the direction whence the sounds came, and was astonished to see they were close abreast of an island, on which he could discern the outlines of large, massive buildings, the windows of which were ablaze with brilliant light.

"No one on board but himself appeared to have heard the music or seen the island, and willing to be the first who should set foot on shore to ascertain what the island was, and, moreover, feeling an irresistible impulse to see who they were who sang so sweetly, he silently entered a boat, which was secured astern, cast loose the rope and rowed for the island.

"He found, however, that it was farther away than he anticipated, and would have again returned to the vessel, only some unseen but powerful attraction seemed to urge him on. As he at length approached the shore, several gaily-decked barges darted out from snug little harbour coves, the crews of which thronged into his boat, overwhelming him with inquiries as to who he was, and

whence he came, at the same time steering his boat to shore.

"Dazzled and confused by the beauty and youthful freshness of the beings who questioned him, he remained silent, upon which one said—'He is still mortal; let us take him to the King.'

"On reaching the shore he was carried through beautiful gardens, in which were growing lovely flowers of every hue and colour, loading the air with sweet perfume, while birds sang as though it were always summer. As he was carried along he heard the happy, joyous merriment of children at play, and he saw them chasing each other among the flowers and trees, and pelting each other with roses; not one of the many children he saw were pale or sad looking, they appeared never to have shed tears, their little faces beamed with sunshine and happiness, care had not touched them, love surrounded them, making them beautiful and glad.

"Just as he was thinking how delightful it must be to spend such a childhood, his conductors arrived at the open doors of a wonderful palace, the floors of which were of cedar wood, while the walls were hung with the richest coloured velvet; here it was that the song he had heard on board had been sung, for he still heard its strains echoing through the lofty halls and rooms; presently they came to the throne-room and into the presence of the King, who, seated on a magnificent golden

throne, blazing with the light of precious stones, appeared to his eyes the most majestic and royal creature he had ever seen; but his voice was soft, and low, and wonderfully sweet, when he spoke, and bade the man and his conductors approach.

"One explained to the King how they had seized the man they bore with them; and, as he was mortal, wished to know what they should do with him, as none who were mortal were allowed to wander in their 'Happy Island.' 'Let him,' said the King, 'roam about our island for the space of one day, see its beauties, and drink in its loveliness; after which set him again adrift in his boat, that he may return to his fellow mortals and tell them what he has seen.'

"So the man was shown all the glories of the island. He found that all who dwelt there were always happy, no care or trouble ever disturbed them, no sorrow ever made them shed bitter tears, no disease ever gave them pain, and old age never stole away their beauty or youth, but instead, they always appeared to be growing younger and more lovely; children were as bright as sunbeams, women, lovely as a dream, while the men were handsome and strong; no unkind words were spoken, no mocking laughter was heard, all was harmony, peace, kindness, and love.

"As the man wandered beneath the wide-spreading branches of tall trees, or plucked the beautiful flowers, or rested by the side of sparkling fountains, drinking in

onderful strains of music, and breathing soft, balmy irs which fanned his cheeks, he was told that the flowers ie saw and the birds he heard sing never died or lost their beauty; no bitter east wind ever blew upon them, and no cold or storm visited them. Enchanted by the loveliness of all he saw, when the time came for him to take his departure, he implored the King to let him remain and live there, for life would be very dreadful after what he had seen.

"But the King said, 'No, it cannot be; all who live here have to pass through toil, and pain, and sorrow, have to shed many bitter tears, have to become tired with weary walking and labour; have first of all to learn how to endure, to suffer, be patient, and become strong. You have much to pass through before you can be received into our Happy Island. All whom you here behold have earned their right to their happy home. Go thou and earn thine!'

"And so the man was carried again to his boat, and sent adrift on the water. He reached the ship; no one had noticed his absence, and when morning dawned the Happy Island was nowhere to be seen, and when he told the story of his night adventure, his messmates laughed and said he'd been dreaming."

"Poor man!" said Lily, with tears in her eyes, when Growler had ended, "poor man! I am sorry for him, I hope he gained the Happy Island at last."

"Yes, love, we'll hope so; but don't you think, Lily, that before you gain your beautiful home you may have to endure and suffer? I have heard that all that is worth having has to come through suffering and endurance."

"Perhaps I may, Growler," answered Lily, thoughtfully; "but something comes over me stronger every day, a feeling that I must be up and searching for my home."

"We'll pray God to give you strength, darling."

"Yes, and He will help me to find my home."

"But you won't leave Old Growler alone, will you, Lily?"

The child looked up into his face wistfully for a moment or two, then, laying her little delicate hand upon his, said, "I won't if I can help it, Growler, for I love you exceedingly; but if the voices persuade me, you must try and not grieve too much."

CHAPTER VI.

THE CHANCE GUEST.

ON the evening of the day in which Growler had spoken of the "Happy Island," himself and the child were seated outside their cottage door reading the story of Abraham entertaining angels unawares, in the midst of which Lily exclaimed, "Here comes one to visit you, Growler!"

"Judging from his hairy face, and what he carries under his arm, I should say he was an artist, and not an angel," said old Growler, looking up from his Bible. Never having seen an angelic being, he was doubtful of one appearing to himself unless it were in a dream.

They watched the stranger approach. He came quickly, with a free, swinging kind of gait, singing the burden of some song, and looking far across the sea, as though his eyes were drinking in the beauty of the setting sun, while his voice gave utterance to his soul's gladness.

"He must be young," said Growler, "or he would not sing so loudly."

The stranger, unconscious of the comments passed upon him, drew near, revealing himself as a black-haired, black-bearded, and black-eyed young man; broad in shoulders and brow, the whole face alive with thought and the subtle expression of genius.

"Ah, Lily," whispered the seaman, "angels are fair and blue-eyed, and not like this chance guest, for such I think he will prove."

Courteously saluting the old man and child, who had risen at his approach, he wished them good evening.

"Good evening, sir," returned Growler, "will you rest a bit after your walk?"

"With pleasure, old friend, if you will inform me whether this is a magician's hut, and whether you have power to weave sunbeams into human creatures, that you have one made of 'spirit, fire, and dew,' by your side?" was the stranger's reply to the invitation, as his eyes were attracted by the beauty of the child, who was regarding him attentively.

"Nay, nay, sir, I am but a simple old man. This is my Lily."

"Your sunbeam, you mean. My little fairy, have you no word to say to me?"

"Sir," replied the child, sedately, "I am very pleased to see you, your face pleases me," and she held out her hand.

The stranger blushed as he bent his face over the

little hand, saluting it with a kiss. Throwing down his knapsack, leaning his portfolio against the wall, and opening his camp-stool, on which he seated himself, he said, "I will drink in a little more of the beauty of this scene; the soul filled with beauty has no room for deformity. Ah," he continued, "this is something like; I salute you, grand old life giver of the universe. If all our lives have such a setting we shall do; what say you, Golden Hair?"

"I do not quite understand you, sir."

"No! Well then, what I mean is this, if our lives end and sink into the grave with as much beauty as yonder sun, we shall have a fair reception in our beautiful home."

"Is the sun, sir, the golden doors of my beautiful home?"

"*Your* beautiful home! Have you one?" said the stranger, with surprise.

"Somewhere, sir. I have lost it, and cannot find it again."

"We have all wandered from some regal home," said the stranger, "and, like the boy in the fairy legend, we shall never be satisfied until we find it again."

"I wish I could find mine. I hear voices calling to me to follow them and search for it; but no one tells me where to go."

"Patience, fair friend; time, and courage, and desire will find it for you one day."

Growler, who had been busy brewing a cup of tea for his unexpected guest, now appeared with it at the cottage door, which the stranger accepted, inquiring whether he might trespass on the old man's hospitality for the night.

"If," replied Growler, "you can content yourself with an old man's hammock, you are welcome. The accommodation is poor, but the welcome is hearty."

"I am an old traveller, friend," said the stranger, "and prefer a poor accommodation and a hearty welcome, to rich accommodation and a churlish welcome. It is like eating, it is not so much what we eat as whom we eat it with."

"Sir, will you show me some of your pictures?" said Lily.

"With pleasure, child," replied the stranger, opening his portfolio, from which he selected several sketches and water-coloured drawings, handing them one by one to the child, who, with a little flush of colour in her cheeks, examined with delighted attention the various specimens of the stranger's skill. "Do you understand that?" he said, handing her one in which a poor bird was represented beating up against the gilded wires of its cage, as though longing to bathe itself in the sunshine, and soar into the depths of the blue sky. Over this was written, "*Poor Humanity.*"

"Yes, I think I do," said Lily, regarding the picture

attentively. "I feel something fluttering here that wants to be free," laying her hand upon her heart, "and sometimes I wish I could fly like a bird."

"You are young to have felt the prison bars already."

Another of the drawings represented a sky full of clouds, nothing but clouds, dark, sombre, and lowering; red, angry, and swollen; threatening, they appeared as though charged with lightnings and thunder. But as you looked attentively at them they resolved themselves into angel faces—"*Cloudland*," the artist called it.

"For every cloud in life is but an angel's face."

"True," said Growler, "but we see only the cloud now."

"When our eyes are purified, the angels will appear."

"You must be fond of your profession, sir," suggested Growler.

Fond is too tame a word. I am her devoted slave, for Art came to me in my boyhood with silver wings all tipped with gold, and face bathed in the sunshine of eternal beauty. She made her home in my heart and took captive all its powers; she reigned sole queen of my affections; she was the first to salute me in the morning, and she appeared to me in dreams of the night; I saw her in every flower, in every blade of grass, in every leaf of the tree; in sky, and cloud, and sun, and stars; in earth, and air, and heaven; I heard the tones of her sweet voice in every breeze, in the music of every

stream, and the song of every bird; in the brightness of the light she made herself heard, and in the hushed silence of the night."

"What is Art?" said Growler, a little bewildered by the stranger's talk.

"Art, sir? Art is æsthetics; Art is Truth made beautiful; Art is the Fairy Prince who with a kiss awakes our being into new consciousness; Art is the realisation of that old mythic fable of men snatching fire from heaven, whereby they are men no longer, but gods."

"Sir," said Growler, "you soar above me, I know nothing of Art; I am but a poor, ignorant man, trying to live by the light of this Book, which has been my chart and compass for many years."

"What, are you there, old friend? give me your hand!" exclaimed the guest; "I am an enthusiast in Art; when I think of *Art* I forget I am a Christian; I forget there is something that transcends Art, that is interwoven with it, that has given to Art some of its most glorious subjects, and without whom Art might have been one of the lost blessings of the race; for did not Christianity in the dark mediæval ages find Art nigh starved unto death, wandering over the world lonely and forlorn, and take her into its cloisters, and preserve and cherish her, until the world was ready to receive her again?"

"Art is Divine, then?" said Growler, inquiringly.

"Can you doubt its Divine origin? While Christi-

anity helped her, she in her turn helped Christianity; she has depicted in all the beauty of form and colour the incidents of our great Founder's life, and those of His followers; men and women, young men and maidens, gazing on great works of Art have been thrilled with awe, as though they heard the voice of God speaking in their souls, and have been constrained to leave the frivolities of pleasure, the allurements of the world, and turn to the great source of Love."

"Art does not satisfy, then," said Growler.

"What does? No. However beautiful we find Art to be, we feel there must be a great centre of beauty somewhere existent, and the soul is not at rest until it has found it."

Lily had listened very attentively to the stranger's conversation, and now interrupted him by inquiring whether Art came from her beautiful home.

"Yes, child," he replied; "but it only brings with it hints and fragments of what that home is, it is not the home itself."

"Then I must still search," sighed the child.

The shadows of evening had fallen over land and sea, the sky was alive with stars, lighting up the group as they sat near the door of the cottage, while the sound of the waves as they fell upon the sands was borne to their ear.

"I think it's time for you to turn in now, Lily dear," said Growler; and as the child rose responsive to his

intimation, he continued, "bid the gentleman good night, and do not forget your prayers."

"Let her say them out here beneath this solemn sky; I always imagine prayer goes more freely up to God when there is no roof to hide the stars."

So, in compliance with the implied wish of the stranger, Lily offered up her simple petition to the heavenly Father beneath the quiet light of the stars; the stranger removing his hat, and reverently bending his head, as the sweet, clear, musical tones of the child's voice ascended up far beyond all worlds.

"To be remembered in a child's prayer is like having the angel of our youth pleading for us. Come here, my golden-haired Lily. When I was about your age I had a mother at whose knee I used to repeat my prayers night and morning; she wrote me out one herself, telling me to repeat it every night, as it would do for manhood as well as youth, and, true to the promise I made her, I have never once forgotten to repeat it. Would you like to hear me repeat it now?"

"Yes, sir, very much."

"Well, then, listen."

And in a low, earnest voice the stranger uttered the following brief, simple petition:—

Dear Saviour, hear me,
Bend from above,
Breathe on me blessing,
Breathe in me love;

Shield me from danger,
Trouble, and strife,
Aid me in climbing
Steep hills of life.

Dark angels, leave me,
Frail is *your* power
If I am guarded
By *Him* every hour;
He will not leave me
If I entreat
Aid and protection
Here at His feet.

Dear Saviour, hear me,
Bend from above,
Breathe on me blessing,
Breathe in me love;
Saviour dear, fold me
Close to Thy breast,
Then sink I sweetly
And safely to rest.

"And where is her beautiful home?" said the stranger, as the child retired to rest.

"'In My Father's house are many mansions;' she came from one, and will never rest until she returns," said Growler.

"'The beauty of the Lord be upon her.'"

"Amen! It has already descended."

CHAPTER VII.

A SNOWDROP'S MISSION.

ON the following morning Lily, who had been turning over the contents of the stranger's portfolio, went to him with a drawing in her hand, asking him to explain its meaning. It represented a pale-faced little girl lying in bed, evidently ill and unable to rise. In a vase, on a table close to the bed, was a beautiful, pure snowdrop, at which the sick girl was gazing with a questioning light in her eyes.

"There is a story attached to that, my child," said the stranger, "which I will tell you when we are in the boat."

The boat was soon ready, the stranger and Lily seated side by side, while Growler handled the oars. "And now, sir, will you tell me the story of the little girl and the snowdrop?"

"Yes, and you may call the story '*The Snowdrop's Mission*,' for it shows that even so simple a thing as a tiny flower has some work to perform.

"One morning, in the latter part of winter, while the now still covered meadow, tree, and hedge-row, a little nowdrop, having struggled up through the earth, unolded itself and looked out upon the world. 'Dear, lear,' it exclaimed, after looking carefully round, 'what dreary place this is—nothing but snow! I did expect o find a prettier world than this. How cold it is! why, quite shiver. Now I wish I had been contented to remain snug in the warm earth, and not have troubled myself to struggle up and out into such a place as this.'

"With a sigh of disappointment the little snowdrop hung its head, not caring to see more of the wintry landscape than it was compelled; indeed, so great was its disappointment in not finding things wearing a brighter aspect, that it would willingly have folded itself up and withdrawn back again into the seclusion of the earth; but as this was impossible it hung its pretty head, with the determination of confining its observations to as limited a sphere as it could command.

"Now it so chanced that a little mound of pure white snow, lying close to the snowdrop, rejoicing in the sharp frosty air, and getting quite crisp and hard under its influence, overheard the murmured discontent of the flower—whose words had been uttered careless as to who might, or who might not hear them—and in a sharp tone said, 'What a fuss you are making, my dainty little neighbour, about a little cold and the dreariness of the

world! Pray may I ask what kind of world you expected to find, and whether you thought everything would be according to *your* wishes and ideas of comfort and beauty?'

"'If,' replied the snowdrop, without looking up, 'I did not expect to find everything as I should wish it to be, I did anticipate seeing things somewhat different to what they are,—not find the air so cold, or the earth covered with one uniform garment of snow.'

"'As for the cold,' said the mound, 'one soon gets accustomed to its sharpness, and hardens beneath its influence, while the snow, of which I am part, helps to keep the grain warm already sown for the future harvest. My advice is, endure it patiently.'

"'Ah, it is all every well for you to talk,' sighed the snowdrop, 'but had you have laboured, and struggled, and panted as I have, you would sing another tune. Why, my journey all up through the earth has been one great pain. I have had to gather strength from the warmth, nourishment from the moisture, and courage and sustenance from the black mould. My travelling hitherto has been anything but a pleasure; it was only the prospect of rest and freedom, after which I was sighing, that gave me patience to go through it all.'

"'Then why were you not content to remain in the earth?' inquired the snow.

"'Because there was an inner impulse which urged me upward. I felt cramped and confined, I wanted more room; and the water, and the earth, and the warmth all spoke of the possibility of my attaining it if I persevered; and I did, and this is the result.'

"'Well, friend,' said the snow, 'it strikes me that had you not struggled up as you say you have, you would not have developed into that exceedingly pretty flower that you now are.'

"'Ah, there may be something in that,' said the snowdrop, meditatively. 'Now I recollect, something did whisper that if I endured my pain I should attain to great beauty, and when I said, "Why not have the beauty without the pain?" the reply was something about its being a law that the one could not be without the other, but I did not rightly understand it all; it's a wrong time to preach in the midst of suffering.'

"'Well, friend, you have expanded into beauty evidently, and now it remains to be seen to what use and purpose you are to turn your beauty.'

"'I dare say it won't be long, friend snow, before a way is found for its use. Thank you for your observations. I am quite content now with my lot, and really do not find the air so cold as I did at first. You must pardon my murmurings.'

"'Nay, friend, say no more; nothing is perfect,' replied the snow, sententiously; 'I once floated up in

the air as a cloud, but in falling I changed my nature, and am as you see me; but my existence will be very brief—my work done, I shall dissolve away.'

"Just as the snow concluded, a young girl stepped into the garden, her beautiful bright eyes wandering here and there as if in search of something. No sooner did their glance alight upon the snowdrop than she exclaimed, 'Oh, the darling flower! I began to think that none would ever come to tell us that the long winter was nearly over, and that beautiful bright spring was close at hand;' and, picking the flower, she continued, 'I will take this to poor, dear Ada; it will shed light and freshness into her sick room, and give her visions of bright green fields and lovely spring flowers. Poor, dear Ada! will she ever roam in green meadows again?' and the young girl sighed as she thought of the many long, weary days her beloved sister had been confined by sickness to her room and her bed. 'Ah, she is very patient; I never hear her murmur, but every morning she grows paler and thinner, for the night brings her no sleep.'

"A tear dimmed the beautiful bright eyes.

"'I am happy,' murmured the snowdrop, as it was being placed in a slender vase, 'I am happy; I am to carry hope to a sick girl's room. There is a tradition in my family that our very blossom signifies hope. I will do my best to cheer the poor girl's heart.'

"Softly the young girl stepped up the carpeted stairs, and gently opening her sister's room door, went in. Holding the flower behind so as to hide it from sight, and with a merry sparkle in the eyes, and a smile on the face, she exclaimed, 'Guess, Ada darling, what I have for you!'

"A pale little face was raised from the white pillow, a pair of dark eyes looked questioningly into the sparkling ones, while a sweet, but very low voice said, 'I can't guess, Rosy darling; tell me what it is.'

"Not to keep her sister in suspense, although it was pleasant fun to the bright girl, she exhibited her treasure, the snowdrop.

"'Oh, Rosy, what a love! Where did you pick it? How kind of you to think of bringing it to poor me!' And the poor girl examined the pretty flower, kissing it gain and again in the flush of her pleasure, while her ster stood looking on, her cheeks glowing with colour the thought that she had been the means of imparting much delight to her treasured Ada, whom she loved r much, and whose long illness had made her the ing of the household.

'Kiss me, Rosy dear; your love is always contriv- ome pleasant surprise to make the weary hours pass y away.'

Bless you, Ada darling!' said Rosy, kissing her ster, 'it was very little to do for you, but I thought

"Not to keep her sister in suspense, she exhibited her treasure, the snowdrop."—My Beautiful Home, Page 70.

it would make you have pleasant dreams of spring. Do you recollect what the song says?'

"'Which one, Rosy, there are so many?'

"'I mean the one papa wrote for you. I will repeat it:—

'When the snowdrop comes
Spring is very near;
Then the cold, cold snow
Soon will disappear;
Frozen brooks will lose
All their icy band,
And be sweetly making
Music through the land.

'Sap begins to rise
Up from roots of trees;
Soon on every twig
In the gentle breeze
Green leaves will flutter,
And throughout the night
Underneath the stars
Whisper their delight.

''Neath the laughing sun
Green will grow the earth;
And the fields will echo
To the children's mirth;
While from every copse,
Hedge-row, wood, and tree,
Happy birds will make
Joyful melody.'

"'And do you recollect,' continued the young girl, 'the origin of the snowdrop. When Eve was driven out of Paradise, her heart was full of sadness; but when she saw the beauty and loveliness of spring, summer, and autumn, she was a little cheered, and thought that the world outside Eden was not so bad after all. When, however, winter came with its storms of wind and snow,

she became terrified, and thought the earth was about to die, the snow covering it for a winding sheet. While she was shedding bitter tears of regret, an angel came down from heaven to console her; he took her by the hand, telling her not to despair, for that everything should come beautiful and bright again; and seizing a snow-flake ere it fell to the ground, he breathed upon it and it became a snow-drop. Eve's heart thrilled with joy as she beheld the lovely flower; while the angel said, "This, amid all this wintry waste and desolation, shall be as a sign that spring will return again." He then flew back to heaven; but where he had stood, while he spake to Eve, there sprang up a circle of the pretty flowers, whose fair heads rested upon the cold snow. Then was Eve's soul comforted.'

"'When the bright girl left the room the poor invalid took the flower in her hand, and, softly pressing it to her lips, murmured, 'Dear, pretty snowdrop! I am so glad to welcome you to this close room! I have so longed for a lovely flower to tell me that winter would soon go away, and beautiful bright spring come again. Perhaps then I may be able to sit up and look out at the green fields, although I sometimes fear I shall never run in them any more. Do you understand, snowdrop?—never, never more. It makes me so sad; I cry in the night, it troubles me so.'

"'Do not cry,' whispered the snowdrop; 'I have

heard that there is a land somewhere, where people are never ill, and where flowers are always blooming.'

"'Did you come from such a land?' inquired the sick girl, surprised at what she had heard.

"'While struggling up out of the black earth, I was told that I was but the faint shadow of a snowdrop that was flourishing in another land—that all flowers have their origin in that land, and will return to it again, and never die.'

"'Ah, where is that land? and how am I to get there?' said the sick girl.

"'I cannot say where it is,' replied the snowdrop, 'nor yet exactly how it is to be reached; but patience, you will learn.'

"'I suffer so,' wailed the poor child.

"'Only for a little time,' whispered the flower, 'I suffered while I was struggling, and now, see how beautiful I am.'

"'Yes, you are very lovely; but will my pain consummate itself in beauty.'

"'No beauty is attained without suffering,' said the snowdrop.

"'Dear, lovely flower!' murmured the sick girl, caressingly, 'you have put a great hope into my heart; I shall never be despondent again.'

"'This is happiness,' said the flower to itself.

"At intervals throughout the day, the snowdrop and

the child interchanged confidences with each other, and when the various members of the household came into the room, when the shadows of evening had gathered there and night was fast approaching, to bid her good night, they were all amazed to see the bright smile upon the invalid's thin face.

"'How well you look to-night, darling,' said Rosy, kissing her; 'keep always such a bright face and you will soon be well.'

"'Yes, soon be well,' echoed Ada, dreamily.

"When the cold light of the wintry morning flooded the room, they found both the flowers had faded. And when Ada, the darling of the household, was laid in her last long home, the withered snowdrop rested on her bosom."

"Thank you, sir," said Lily, as the stranger concluded; "Ada had gone to the land where the flowers never die."

"Yes, child, and when you have found that home, I fancy it will prove to be the one you sigh after. But we have arrived at the spot where I must bid you farewell."

Farewells were exchanged, and, stepping lightly from the boat, the stranger climbed the cliff, soon vanishing from their sight for ever.

"And now, Lily dear," said Growler, "sit and mind the boat while I go up into the village to get what food -ant."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE OLD ORGANIST.

GROWLER, however, had not proceeded far from the boat before the child desired him to return and secure it, as she wished to accompany him into the village, and pay a visit to the church while he transacted his business.

The church, to which Lily bent her steps, was just outside the village, in a gentleman's park, and almost hidden from sight by a clump of sycamore trees; the spire alone was visible as it silently pointed upward to the skies, as though it would direct the thoughts to the great things of eternity. It was not a large building, but many generations had worshipped there, and outside, in the churchyard, many generations slept their last sleep; little children had tottered there by their mother's side, and had grown up to be old, grey-haired men and women, and in their second childhood had been carried there to rest.

Lily loved to sit alone in this church, with the sunshine streaming through the painted window; the effigy

of a knight in complete armour was there, lying with his hands folded as if in silent supplication; the child loved to fancy, that the warrior it represented had spent all his life in doing valiant battle, in which he had found but scant time for prayer, so that when he came to die he had given directions, that in his effigy his hands should be folded, that people might see he was a Christian soldier and believed in prayer.

Folded hands are mute appeals to heaven. Sometimes a mute appeal is of more worth than many words—a tear, than many prayers spoken with the lips. One man smote upon his breast, not daring to lift his eyes to heaven; while another, with uplifted face and in a loud voice, proclaimed himself to be a good man and worthy of reward.

As the child entered into the churchyard her ear caught the tones of the organ, at which her heart was glad, for music was a rich delight to her, and ministered more to her peculiar fancies than aught else. She entered the church, and stood in the deserted aisle, where, in gorgeous colours, the sun reflected the figures of apostles and saints, and bathed her whole person in glory, so that her golden hair seemed to be surrounded with an aureole of loveliness.

The organ continued to pour forth strains of wonderful harmony, skilful fingers were wandering over the cold ivory keys; skilful, but erratic, for it was not one con-

tinued strain of praise, an anthem, a selection from some grand old master, which streamed forth; the player seemed guided in his playing by some fitful spirit, some fanciful mood, as though the organ were the soul of a man, and circumstance was playing upon it to bring forth all its varied tones of grief, joy, pain, and despair; for at times an exquisite strain of melody would burst forth, as though a great joy were being expressed in music, which would suddenly change into a scream of pain, or wail of anguish, as if a cruel hand had dashed away the cup of gladness ere it had reached the lips; then would tears and sobbings be heard, and wailing petitions for mercy, which would as rapidly change into a triumphant burst of praise, a jubilant shout of exultation.

The sensitive soul of the child was stirred to its very depth by the skill of the mysterious player, who used his organ like the soul of a man, making it reveal its hidden joys and despairs. Suddenly the music ceased, and as Lily looked up into the gallery, where the organ stood, she became aware that the player had left his seat and was attentively regarding her.

He was a little old man, dressed in a snuff-coloured suit of brown, a few scattered grey hairs covered his head; his face was withered, and dry, and full of wrinkles but his eyes were large and full of a deep, mysterious light, as if the tones of the organ which he played had made their way to the soul through *them*, instead of

through their more ordinary and usual channel. He looked feeble and weird, did this organist, as though he had lived all his days in the organ loft, or the church belfry, and sustained his life by catching the music of the bells and the organ; and for company had associated with those spirits which are said to haunt churches.

Lily looked up at the old man, and the old man gazed down upon the child, each apparently uncertain what to make of the other. Perhaps there flitted through the old man's mind the fancy—a wild one you will say, reader—that he beheld the embodiment of some of his own fanciful music. Musicians are strange people, and are not to be judged in the same way, and by the same method by which we judge ordinary men and women. They think so differently, and feel so differently to what other men do, that we ought to have quite a separate set of rules and laws by which to measure and judge their thoughts, actions, and lives.

The child was the first to break the silence by saying—"Will you play again, sir?"

"Come up here, child, and let me look at you," replied the old organist, in a weak and quavering voice.

Lily glided from the sunshine up into the organ loft, and stood before the old man—he was not much taller than the child—who placed his hand beneath her chin so as to turn her face more to the light, that he might ·ize it better. They gazed into each other's eyes.

The old organist must have had such eyes as Lily when he was a boy—long, long ago now—and if Lily lived to be of the same age as the organist, her eyes would then be like his. Her's had not long opened to the world, and were full of wonder at the mysterious and indefinite character of all she saw and heard; his had been open for more than threescore years and ten, and yet their expression was that of mysterious wonder, as though the riddles of life were not yet explained.

"Where do you come from, child?" questioned the old man.

"I came from along the coast."

"Do you love music?"

"I do, indeed, sir, and sometimes think I should like to be able to compose the most wonderful of all music; music that should stir men's souls, and melt them to tears; music that should embody the voices which come from the sea, the air, and the storm, and yet should include the odour of the flowers and all their variety of colour; for I suppose, sir, colour can be expressed in music."

"Music, my child, can express anything. When I was young I indulged in such dreams as yours, but now I am old I live contented in the music for its own sake. And that which I tried to embody in it when young and ambitious, comes now of its own accord without effort or thought."

The old man spoke in a thin, piping voice, with perhaps a lingering touch of regret in its tones; regret, it may be, for his long past youth and its dreams which could never come back again.

"Yes, my child," he continued, "music can do almost anything; it can rouse an army to fight, and make an exile weep for his native land; it can soften the stony heart of a sinner, and bring tears to the eyes of the impenitent. And this organ of mine," he added, laying his hand upon it gently and lovingly, "is a most wonderful organ; you have but to run your fingers over its cold keys and it will breathe most delicious melody."

"How you must love it, sir!" said Lily.

"Love is too cold a word to express my feelings," said the old man, excitedly; "it is my companion, my friend, my best love, my wife, my child; it cheers me in sadness, it calms and harmonizes all the discords in my nature; music, my child, is heaven. The whole earth was made to music, I believe, and moves along musically. One has merely to listen to the wind in the tree tops, or the splash of waves on the sands, to be sure of this. Music is everywhere, and the terrible music of the storm finds its way into this old church, and penetrates into this my organ, so that sometimes when I commence to play, angry storm voices breathe themselves out instead of the strain I intended; sometimes they sound like the wailing despair of sailors, drowning far out at sea, as the

dark waters close over their heads. Ah! there never was such an organ as mine, listen!"

Seating himself, the organist ran his fingers over the keys, and the music which his touch aroused seemed to Lily like the sound of furious winds and angry waves, such as she had frequently heard howling round Growler's cottage through stormy nights and tempestuous days.

"Ah! ah! what think you of that?" said the little old man, turning his face round to where the child stood. "What think you of that, is it not the storm wind itself?"

"It is very fearful, sir," replied Lily; "you make me tremble when you play thus."

"But the voices which creep into this organ, and take up their abode here, are not all of them angry voices. Whispers such as angels might breathe are locked up here, but do not often awake, or come from their hiding places; it is my belief they are afraid the angry voices will tear them in pieces. Listen again and I will try and woo these timid ones from their secret dwelling places."

This time the music which the player's fingers awoke was marvellously sweet, an exquisite melody which thrilled the soul with a delight almost painful, and might well be called the murmurings of angel voices. It brought tears to Lily's eyes.

"Ah! you weep!" said the old man; "strange, almost everybody weeps when they hear this. But it is only in the night that I can woo it entirely from its cave. When the sky is full of stars, I creep silently down into the church, and up here into my seat, when it comes out and sings to the stars. One night," continued the old man, "when the moon was shining through the windows, I saw a woman steal softly into the church, with disordered dress, tangled hair, and such fearful eyes that I shuddered to catch their light, for I thought she must be an evil spirit. But you know that King David charmed away Saul's evil spirit by music, so I seated myself and played those angel whisperings you just heard. Then I saw the woman fall upon her knees, and hide her face on the ground, and soon I heard sobs, and moanings, as of a spirit in distress. It was the music, child, the music which had touched her heart, and quenched the fearful light of her eyes in tears."

"What became of the poor woman?" inquired Lily.

"I do not know, she stole out again and I saw her no more. But it was the music which touched her:

'Soft stillness, and the night
Become the touches of sweet harmony.'"

"Where does music come from, sir?"

"I know not, my child, unless it comes from the beautiful home of the soul, where all is perfect harmony."

"And where is that home, sir?"

"We must all seek for it, my child, it is to be found by all who search, by man, woman, or child.

"It is all search, search!" murmured Lily to herself, as she bade the little man good-bye.

CHAPTER IX.

GROWLER SAILS ON UNKNOWN SEAS.

"I DON'T know how it is, Lily, dear," said Growler, resting on his oars, "but I don't feel quite the thing. The day is bright and warm, and yet I feel shivery; then, again, I feel hot and burning, as if something were running madly through my veins; then, too, my head is as heavy as lead."

The child looked at her old friend apprehensively, saying—"You are not going to be ill, are you, Growler?"

"I hardly know, dear, but I do feel uncommon curious."

"We must make haste home, and I shall have to nurse you, Growler."

"I hope not, dear; perhaps it will pass off," said Growler, resuming his rowing.

But it did not pass off; and before they reached the cottage Growler felt an increase of his queer sensations

—so much so that Lily was alarmed to see his face flushed, and to feel his hands hot and feverish, while he staggered like a drunken man as he went from the boat to the cottage.

"I must throw out the grapnels; I can't drag the boat to the cave; and, Lily dear, don't be frightened, but I must turn in."

Before night Growler was in a high fever, and delirious, raving about incidents and characters of former years; now he was giving quick, sharp orders in the height of some storm, when moments were of as much value as days of ordinary life; now he was in the excitement of a whale chase, and shouting, "There she spouts;" now his vessel was tossing amid the icebergs of Polar seas; anon they were gliding tranquilly over tropical waters, while Growler read passages from Holy Writ; then again he would fancy himself quelling some mutiny with voice and hand.

Poor Lily was sadly frightened to see her kind protector in such a state, and was fearful that during his violent tossings he would throw himself out of his hammock. Her feeble strength could not hold him down; it was as nothing to his, now the strength of fever was added to muscle and limb. She looked about to see if she could adopt any plan which would prevent him doing an injury to himself during his unconsciousness. The idea had suggested itself to her mind, that if by some means she

could fasten him into his hammock, it might possibly prevent the catastrophe she so much dreaded. Taking a good-sized net which lay in one corner of the cottage, Lily mounted on the table, and, waiting for a favourable opportunity, she threw it over the hammock, tying it tightly underneath, saying to herself as she accomplished her task, "There, poor Growler won't fall out now."

Lily was quite a novice in occasions of sickness; she had never seen any one unwell before, and was much troubled how to act. The safety of Old Growler secured, she questioned herself as to what was best to be done, and whether she should go to the fishing village for help. She looked at her kind friend, who was raging about like a lion caught in the toils of a net, and felt she could not leave him alone in such a sad plight as he then was, and yet knew not what to give to make him better.

The old man had several bottles and boxes of medicine in his chest, but she was ignorant of their use. She examined them one after the other, but could make nothing of them, so thought it the wisest plan to let them alone; otherwise she might kill and not cure her friend. After puzzling her little brains for some time, she at length determined to make him a good strong cup of tea; she knew it was a favourite drink of the old man's, and so far harmless in its nature that it could do him no injury, and it might possibly do him much good.

A fire was soon kindled on the hearth, the water boil-

ing, and the tea brewed. Lily again mounted on the table, and proceeded with gentle tenderness to administer some to her patient. This proved to be no easy task, for, although confined in the net, Growler was still refractory, and it was only after great patience and perseverance that she could prevail upon him to drink; but, when he had been so far overcome as to permit of the cup being placed to his lips, he speedily drunk up its contents.

The child looked like a beautiful little genie, or fairy, administering a dose of physic to a sick giant, who had been left alone to die by his comrades, and whose place the good-hearted little creature had assumed.

Having given her patient the only remedy of which she could avail herself, Lily seated herself on the table to await her friend's return to consciousness. She opened the large Bible and read to herself instances of the wonderful tenderness of Jesus, how kind He was to the poor, and how many of the sick He healed—she read the touching stories of the poor widow's son whom He raised from the dead, and of the centurion's little daughter. As she read she could not but wish in her heart that the tender Saviour was there to touch Old Growler with His finger, and say unto him, "*Arise.*"

When the sun was throwing long shadows over land and sea Growler had a lucid interval, and, calling Lily to draw near, he said, in a low voice, to the dear child,

as she bent her head down to listen, and placed one of her hands in his,—

"Darling, I am going to pieces like a stranded hulk; I feel the waters of the unknown sea beating upon me: my yarn is most ended—all will soon be over."

"What sea is it, Growler, that beats against you?" inquired the child.

"Eternity, dear, the greatest of all seas, over whose waters we must all sail, but never return."

"Is it dark, Growler?"

"No, child, I see a bright light."

"Are the waters troubled?"

"Yes, child, they heave and foam, but the light is steadfast."

"What is the light like, dear Growler?"

"Like that of a great human face; it beams across the dark, troubled waters like a mighty sun to illuminate my path."

"Whose face is it—do you know, Growler?"

"No, child—no. But 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.'"

"Oh, Growler, dear, do not go!" cried Lily, sad tears blinding her eyes.

"The light is growing brighter, darling, and a sweet voice says, '*Come*,' while I see a hand stretched

"

Here Growler again relapsed into a paroxysm of fever, and raved loudly of bygone years. The child drew back, half-affrighted at his violence, and wholly awed at what he had said concerning the mysterious waters and light.

The hours glided away, evening came with its shadows, and night with its darkness. The child lighted a candle, and continued her watch by the hammock. How strange it seemed to her that the genial voice of her friend should be so changed, and more strange still that he should be unconscious of her presence, and deaf to her pleadings. She stilled her tears, and thought of the wonderful face he had seen, and wondered whether such a face shed a light in her own lost home.

When the stars were about to disappear, and far away in the eastern sky a faint glimmer of light heralded the morn, Growler became again partly conscious, and said slowly,

"Lily, the sealed orders are on board, the Captain has come, I am bound for foreign service. Child! what am I saying? Where am I?"

"Here, Growler, dear—here in your hammock."

"Yes, I recollect now. But listen, dear. It will soon be all over. When I am gone you must not stay here; you must go to the fishing village—some one will take care of you and love you."

"Don't go, Growler, dear!" sobbed Lily.

"I must, darling, or I shall lose the tide; it waits for no one, and it's on the ebb!"

"And the face, Growler?"

"Yes, I see it; it is there still, but larger. Hark at the waves! Lily——"

"What is it, Growler, dear?"

"Look, your beaut——"

"What, what? I am listening, dear."

"Beautiful home!"

In his excitement Growler had thrust his hand through the net, and risen as much as it would permit, but as he eagerly uttered the last words he fell back. He had set sail on the unknown sea whose waters were troubled, but over which shone the light as from that of a human face.

CHAPTER X.

LILY COMMENCES HER SEARCH.

POOR little Lily was awestruck at the changed appearance of her friend, the eyes staring so blindly, the fallen jaw, and the whiteness of the face; she had never seen Death before, he had only been presented to her as a tradition or a possibility. In her lost home she had never heard his name, and her nearest approach to him since, was gazing at the grassy hillocks in a churchyard, beneath which she thought it must be pleasant to sleep. Now, for the first time, she saw him face to face, and veiled her eyes to shut out the sight, calling softly to her friend to speak and not lie so still. She could not as yet realise the fact that the stillness was never to be removed, the silence never to be broken.

After a few minutes she peeped between her fingers to see if the eyes were still open, and an additional shade of awe fell upon her mind as she saw that the light had been taken from them, and that they were unutterably

dark. She stretched out a hand and closed them; the chillness sent a thrill through her little frame. Although her eyes had the expression of tears in them, she could not weep and thus relieve her sorrowful little heart; grief had gone too deep, the suddenness of her loss was too much; she could only lay herself down on the table, cover her face with her hands, and moan pitiful little moans of anguish; and while she lay in that position the bright sunbeams stole in at the windows and played upon the dead man's face, who was never more to feel their warmth or rejoice in their beauty.

The sunshine and the brightness of the morning roused Lily from her prostrate condition. She recollected the last implied wish of Growler that she should make her way to the fishing village, spread the news of her loss, and, if possible, excite the sympathy and help of the inhabitants. It grieved her much to leave the cottage and its silent inmate alone with no one to watch, but being a brave little creature she resolutely repressed her feelings and set out for her long walk.

How beautiful and bright was the morning! How everything seemed to rejoice and be glad in the sunshine! The dew sparkled brighter than diamonds on each blade of grass, and in the cup or bell of every wild flower. The waves of the sea broke out into thousands of dimpled smiles; white sails gleamed far away at sea, white winged birds skimmed along the surface of the

waters ; flakes of song were wafted down from many a feathered throat, and the hum of bees murmured pleasantly in the air. But all this beauty and gladness seemed but to mock Lily's grief, and gave her no pleasure.

The sympathies of the rough, but kindly inhabitants of the fishing village, were speedily aroused on behalf of the lone child. Several of the women accompanied Lily back to perform the last offices to the dead, while one of the men set off to walk to a little town at some distance to make the necessary arrangements for the funeral.

When the day arrived on which the remains of poor Old Growler were to be consigned to their last resting-place, many of the men and women came over to the cottage to follow behind the coffin. It was carried down to the beach and placed in the boat, Lily seating herself at the head, the women at the feet, and in silence, and slowly, the men rowed their dead freight to the point of land where, a few mornings previous, the stranger had parted from his host. The coffin was then removed and carried by the men up the cliff, and from thence, with the child and the women following behind, to the little churchyard belonging to the village where Growler had been accustomed to purchase his provisions. And there they laid him to rest, within sound of the voice of his beloved ocean, over whose waters he was no more to sail.

Solemnly the voice of the clergyman fell upon the little mourner's ears, as he pronounced the "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," and, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoso believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

When the sad procession had returned to the cottage, a home no longer, the women urged Lily to accompany them to their abode in the fishing village, but the child expressed a wish to remain for one night longer at the hut before she bade it farewell for ever.

"But surely not alone," urged one.

"Yes, quite alone, I want to visit each familiar spot once again; to-morrow I will walk over to your homes."

"Won't you be afraid to stay by yourself?" said one.

"Oh, no! why should I be afraid?" said the child.

"But the darkness, will it not terrify you?"

"The darkness is not terrible, I shall not be fearful, do not hesitate to leave me; you are very kind to wish me to go home with you, and to-morrow I shall be glad to be with you; but to-night, if you will allow me, I will spend alone in the cottage."

Finding no inducement could tempt the child to abandon her self-imposed task, they left her, promising to come over early on the following morning to fetch her away. The child watched them as they wended their way home, waving a farewell to them as they turned to catch the last glimpse of her before the increasing dis-

tance hid her from their sight; the sun played upon her golden hair, making a halo round her head, and it was thus she stood revealed as they made her the last wave of the hand.

Lily went into the cottage, and sat down on her accustomed stool; how different the place seemed to what it did when her kind protector was there! A sense and feeling of desolation appeared to pervade the room, clinging to the hammock and roof, and hiding in the dusky corners; every article stood or lay about as though it had been handled for the last time, and was to be used no more for ever; the beams of the setting sun only served to make this more apparent; the wealth of light and life they revealed made the thoughts of the child revert to the life taken away, and she recalled to her mind all the kind words and actions of her dead friend, the care and love he always exhibited for her; now it was all over, she was to see him no more, never again hear the kindly tones of his voice.

"Where has he gone?" murmured the child, "and whose was that wonderful face he saw? How strange it all is! my heart is very sad! for I loved him very much." And for the first time that day tears welled up into her thoughtful eyes. "I cannot live here, now he is gone," she continued, "for I must not live alone; oh, I wish he had taken me with him across the dark sea, then all would have been well."

Drying her tears, Lily left the cottage and went down on to the beach, and sat on the sands to watch once more the going down of the sun, and soon her graceful little form was bathed in the glory of its last lingering beams; she watched the rosy flush die out from the sky, the purple and the violet, and saw the mysterious shadows of the coming night creep up and darken the sea; then a star with its tremulous light shone down upon her, and soon the whole heavens were studded with soft, clear lights, the birds hushed their songs, while through the silence the waves fell gently on the sands.

In the silence and the beauty of the night Lily began to think of her beautiful home, to wonder where it could be; she looked up at the calm stars, and fancied they must be whispering about her, and saying, "Who is that seated down there? Does she not sigh for her beautiful home? Ah, we know where it is, but have not the power to guide her there."

Then the wind seemed to murmur to the waves and say, "Who is that seated there? and what does she want?"

And the waves replied to the wind and said, "She is longing for her beautiful home."

"Ah," said the wind, "I know where that is, and will go and whisper the place softly in her ear."

Although the wind was as good as its word, and murmured softly in her ear, Lily could not understand what

it said, its language was unknown to her. But the air and the sea, and the land seemed full of voices urging her to arise and search for her lost home.

The boat was tossing about gently on the waves ready to carry her on her way, the wind wanted her to go, the waters were eager to bear her away, and was it a fancied vision, or did she in reality see fairy forms clinging round the boat and beckoning her to them? and did her ears deceive her, or was it really one of those pretty creatures which sung in a sweet, clear voice—

Sun has sunk to rest,
  Stars are in the sky,
Silent, watching earth;
  Men in slumber lie,
Sleep has sealed their eyes
  Now the night is come;
Wake, sweet child, and search
  For thy long-lost home!

On the gentle waves
  Soft the breezes play,
And I hear them sing,
  "Haste, child! haste away!
We will gladly bear
  If you will but come,
Search and seek with us
  For thy long-lost home!

Dear ones are weeping
  Across the deep sea,
For their long-lost one,
  Trust yourself with me,
I will safely guide
  To your distant home;
Sweetest and fairest
  Child, will you not come?

"I think I must go," said Lily, as the song ended;

perhaps all those voices I hear will guide me to my
me; besides, there is something within me which im-
res me to search, and certainly I shall never gain it
sitting here."

So Lily unfastened the grapnels and stepped into the
t, which the wind and the waves began to carry away
n the shore; and as she laid herself down to sleep she
ed up at the stars and said, "You will watch over
will you not, kind stars? And all the sweet voices
h I hear bear me safely on my search." Closing her
she fell asleep.

Let us watch her," whispered the stars.

I will blow softly," said the wind.

And we will shield her from harm," said the
s.

ien the men and women arrived from the fishing
e to carry Lily to their homes, they were amazed
d the child gone; they searched everywhere, but
t avail; and finally concluded, as they saw no
hat the dear child must have seated herself in it
ifted out to sea; and all day the men sailed over
ters to find the lone boat, but were compelled to
ish their search when night came down. The idea
ispered among the simple people that Lily had
pirited away; and the memory of the vanished
as preserved as that of a beautiful vision which is
dreams.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FARM-HOUSE.

THE sun had climbed high in the heavens before Lily awoke; she had slept undisturbed throughout the night; indeed, it was only the grounding of the boat, as the waves drifted it on shore, that aroused her from her protracted slumbers. Her eyes opened on strange and unfamiliar scenes, she knew not how far the boat had been carried during the night, or to what place it had at length brought her, but her eyes told her she had never been there before.

Stepping lightly from the boat, the dear child knelt down on the sands to repeat her morning's prayer. There was something extremely beautiful and touching in the little creature's manner and words of devotion—the reverence for, yet implicit trust in, the Divine Father; the certainty that He would guide her safely in her strange quest for her beautiful home, and the confidence with which she reposed on His tenderness and love to forgive her all that she might unconsciously do

that would be unholy in His sight; added to which was the place where the words were breathed forth—the lone seashore, the restless sea, the bright sunshine, and the great arch of the heavens, all tending to make the act impressive. Kneeling there, glorified by the sun, she had not so much the appearance of a human child as that of a little golden-haired angel, who had wandered from its celestial home, and was praying to be re-admitted through the shining gates of the city.

Having performed her morning's devotions, and looked a little about her, Lily began to feel hungry. She had left home without providing herself with any of the necessaries of life, thinking, in her trustfulness, that she would be sure to procure them wherever she went. Now, however, she found herself at first starting needing them, and with no house or cottage near where they might be obtained. Remembering that poor Growler had been accustomed to place food in the boat's locker, she peeped in to ascertain if a stray biscuit still remained, and was fortunate enough to find several, and likewise a piece of dried fish, which last she ate with one of the biscuits, putting the remaining ones in her pocket for future need.

"And now," she said, "I must remain idle no longer, but set out on my search, or I shall never find my home. And must I climb that steep cliff?"

There appeared no other way of reaching the top but

by hard hand, and feet, and knee work; so at it Lily went with a will, sometimes using both her hands and feet in overcoming the rugged steepness of the ascent, while at others she found herself compelled to cling to stray tufts of weed, and inequalities of the rock, and draw herself up by the sheer strength of her hands alone. This she found extremely wearisome, and three or four several times was obliged to rest; and so still did she sit that rabbits would peep out from their burrows and start back affrighted to see the little strange figure, seated there like a bird on a crag, ready to wing its flight into the blue depths of the heavens.

Patience and perseverance, which overcome most difficulties, at length enabled Lily to reach the top of the cliff, when a wide stretch of beautiful country met her sight,—green fields, and waving woods, and sparkling streams, beautiful in themselves, but made more lovely by the glory and light of the sun which rested on them. This far surpassed any scenery Lily had ever seen round about the now deserted cottage, and she thought—"If on my first setting out I see so much of beauty, it will not take me long before I reach the more beautiful which surrounds my home."

And all day long Lily wandered about among long green lanes, where the hedges threw shadows on her path, and waving branches of trees gave shelter from the burning sun. On banks of soft moss she now and then

rested herself, and shallow, gurgling streams cooled her heated and weary feet, while bubbling rills of silvery water quenched her thirst; hid beneath leaves in sheltered nooks, she found roots of sweetly scented violets and late primroses, while delicately tinted woodbine and honeysuckle climbed over the hedges, in whose cups bees were gathering honey, and on which gay butterflies rested for a moment; the fragile web of spiders, on which still hung dewdrops, stretched from twig to twig; industrious little ants were busy gathering food for the distant winter; young birds peeped out from their mossy nests, clamouring for food, while their parents flew hither and thither in search of it, or sat close by filling the air with song. And over all this was the blue sky, where the sun was travelling towards the west.

When the shadows were lengthening, and the blue of the sky was assuming a deeper tint, Lily looked about her to discover, if possible, a house where she might obtain shelter for the night, for her little fragile limbs were weary with much walking; but look which way soever she might, none appeared in sight. There might possibly have been a farm house here and there, hid away among clumps of green waving trees, but these Lily could not detect, so continued her journey, thinking she should have to make her bed on the dewy grass, with the bright stars to watch throughout the night.

It was not so, however, for when she came to the next

turning in the road, she saw a cart standing by the road-side; no horse was in the shafts, or any owner near, but the cart itself was filled with clean yellow straw, which, when Lily saw, she thought would make a very comfortable little nest in which she might nestle for the night. As in the morning, she implored divine protection and guidance, so likewise in the shadows and dusk of evening, she again knelt to solicit care and blessing throughout the night, then climbing up by the wheel, she settled herself cosily in the straw, and after a few minutes fell fast asleep.

Now, it so happened that a few minutes after Lily had fallen asleep, the farmer to whom the cart belonged, who had been down to the smith's to have his horse shod, returned, and putting the animal once more between the shafts, drove away home, unconscious of the little passenger concealed in the straw, and whom the jolting of the cart did not awaken.

When the cart was driven into the farm-yard and the horse stabled, the farmer proceeded to take out the straw, and great was the surprise of the good man when he discovered what it contained. He looked first at the child, then round about the yard, then up into the sky, as if he thought it might possibly have dropped from some passing cloud, while his face seemed to work convulsively from some powerful emotion; finally he ran off to the farm-house, and thrusting his head in at the door, shouted:—

"I say wife, just you look here. Here's our Emmie me back again."

"Lawk a mercy, John, what dost thee say?" replied a trembling voice from an inner room. But before the good wife could reach the outer door to question her husband more closely, the farmer had sped away back again to the cart. The wife quickly followed, and when she saw what had excited her good man's emotion, became herself no less agitated.

"Oh, John, John, what is the meaning of this? Where did you get her? But it is not our Emmie?" questioned the wife, as with quivering eagerness she bent her face over the peaceful features of the child. "What a turn you have given me, John."

"Ay, ay, I feel somewhat queer."

"But where did she come from?"

"That is what I don't know myself. I found her here when I went to take the straw out, and for the moment thought it was our dead Emmie."

"Ah, John, she will never come back again to gladden our hearts and be sunshine in our home."

"True, wife, true, we must go to her. I doubt not she is waiting for us. Be comforted, wife; our dear one loved us here, she does not cease to love us now. It is stronger, is that love now, more enduring."

"Yes, John, yes; but the sight of this little one, so our Emmie, makes all the old sorrow come back."

"Courage, wife; weeping shall but endure for a night. Then cometh joy and morning. But let us take this little one in and lay her in dear Emmie's bed."

Taking Lily up in his arms, the strong-limbed and strong-armed farmer carried her into the house, and upstairs into a small, but very prettily and tastefully furnished bed-room, where he placed her wearied little limbs on white, lavender-scented sheets.

"Dear, dear! how tired she must be, John; look at the dust on her boots and clothes. But I dare not take them off, or I shall wake her; let her rest awhile. Dear, dear, how pretty!" and, with a gentle kiss, the good woman left her to sleep in peace.

An hour or two after, the moon shed her soft, silvery light into the room, stealing silently over the bedclothes on to Lily's face, waking her from her slumbers. It was with no small degree of surprise that the child surveyed the room in which she found herself. She recollected where she had fallen asleep, and under what circumstances, and now it was no longer the cart and the straw, but instead, a pleasantly furnished and decorated room, every article and ornament bearing the impress of loving hearts, in their beauty and arrangement; some tender, ministering spirit had been at work to make happy and glad a dearly beloved and cherished one.

Her first thought was, that during her sleep she had been transported to her beautiful home, and this thought

gathered strength as her eyes roamed about the room which the moon illumined; but in the midst of her wonderment and thought the room door opened, and in came the farmer and his wife, one carrying a candle, the light of which was shielded by the hand, that no sudden ray might fall upon the tired traveller and awake her from her sleep. The good couple, not knowing their little guest was intently watching them with wide open eyes, went to a tiny chest of drawers, from whence they proceeded to take various articles of child's clothing.

"It goes right to my heart, John, to touch our Emmie's things. When she died I laid them all carefully away, and thought I should never care to look at them again; but many a time since then, when you 've been away in the fields and my heart seemed lonesome, and yearned to hear our darling's voice and footsteps echoing through the rooms, I have come up here and turned over these things which she wore, kissed them, and watered them with my tears, while I brought to my recollection the days on which she last wore them, her bright eyes, her loving smile, her sweet voice, until I seemed to feel the clasp of her tender arms round my neck, and the warmth of her pretty lips on my cheek, like as I used to feel them many times throughout each day. Oh, John, all the tears which I have shed will never bring my 'ing back again."

"Ay, ay, wife, I know; it makes my heart very sore, and many, many times with you lying by my side in the silent night, I have fancied I heard our darling's footsteps overhead, seen her come into the room, until I have started up believing it was her, only to sink back again with a greater ache in my heart, while my eyes seemed to shed blood and not water."

"Yes, John—yes, the sunshine went out of our hearts and home when Emmie went, and only thorns are there now. Look here: do you remember when we gave her this book on her last birthday, how she put one arm round each of our necks, and said in her sweet voice—which sounded always sweeter than bird's songs in our ears—'God bless you, dear mother and father, how very kind you are; I love you more than I can say; my heart seems to be swelling with love; one day I will try and make you as happy as you make me.' And now, John, she 's gone!"

"Ay, wife, and do you recollect her last words as we stood weeping by the bedside, as she held her little mouth up to be kissed, saying, 'Kiss me, dear mother and father. Don't cry much. Good-bye. Forgive me if I have been a trouble sometimes.'"

"Oh, John, John, don't; my heart will break if you talk so! How much would we not give to have such troubles over again; it was never trouble she gave us, it was love."

And the bereaved mother burst into a passion of sobs and tears.

"There, there, wife, don't take on so, you will wake the little one; we shall see our darling again some day. This is not our home; we have another one to look forward to where our dear one awaits us."

By degrees the poor mother hushed her weeping, and selecting what articles of dress she thought would be suitable for Lily, with her husband left the room, after gazing for a few moments at the child who appeared still asleep.

Early in the morning, when the good couple stole gently up to their dead child's room, to see if their little guest was awake, to their intense amazement they found she had vanished, and so completely that no trace of her having been there remained, save the impression of her form on the bed.

They had hoped that the little golden-haired stranger would in a measure have supplied the place of their own lost darling. But no lost one can ever be replaced; the love which surrounded such a one on earth, goes with it beyond the grave, and cannot be recalled to bless another, but is retained by the dear one as a silken cord to draw a earth farther from earth and nearer to heaven.

CHAPTER XII.

THE UNKNOWN LAND.

EMILY listened very attentively to the conversation of the farmer and his wife; she had never before seen a mother weep and lament for a dead child. Her little heart was exceedingly grieved, she knew not how common a thing it was in this sad world; common, but always painful and heart-breaking, that shedding of unavailing tears, that inconsolable sorrow which is almost without exception the lot of all mothers when little ones they have fondled, and "fretted with kisses," have been snatched away by the rude hand of death. The little drama enacted before her eyes was but the embodiment of the truth the poet has so beautifully and tenderly expressed when he says:—

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howso'er defended,
But has one vacant chair.

"The air is full of farewells to the dying
And mournings for the dead:
The heart of Rachel for her children crying
Will not be comforted."

The child closed her eyes when the bereaved parents looked at her ere they they left the room, pretending to be still asleep that they might not question her. When they were gone the child pondered over the scene she had witnessed, thinking she would like to stay to help bind up the broken hearts of the poor parents; but the thought of her lost home, for which she was searching, banished this idea from her mind, because, however sorrowful she might be for their loss, she must not abandon her search. She hoped still to be successful, although a little disappointed that her home had not turned out to be the one where she was then resting; but she was conscious it could not be the one, as death dared not invade hers, to snatch loved ones away.

Lily did not know that, however beautiful and lovely home life is here in its peacefulness and affection, it is only a reflection, a shadow of that more beautiful and permanent home life in the "city which is very far off," and where the King in His beauty dwelleth. There is

NO BEAUTIFUL HOME HERE IN EARTHLY HOMES.

When the stars had died out one by one, and the fresh breath of morning passed over sea and land, making the leaves to whisper to each other, the flowers to awake from their slumbers, and the birds to shake the dew-drops from their wings; when the first blush of light flushed the eastern sky, Lily set out again upon her journey. She could not open her chamber door, but was

obliged to scramble down from the window by clinging to the branches of a grape-vine, which had been trained up that side of the house. Her flight seemed to cause no small consternation to a family of swallows, whose nest was underneath the eaves which projected over the window.

Many disappointments befel the dear child during her day's wanderings, and each one as it came seemed to bring with it additional sadness, so that her little heart began to tremble with the apprehension that her search would be a total failure.

She passed many a pretty-looking cottage, where the honeysuckle and monthly rose climbed round the door and shed their fragrance on the air; but in some she heard weepings and wailings, and in others voices raised in angry contention, and she knew neither could be the one for which she searched, for peace reigned in hers, no passion shedding its baleful influence to disturb the blissful calmness. Likewise, during the day, she saw several lordly mansions surrounded by splendid gardens, in one of which were children laughing in play as they pelted each other with flowers; but when she attempted to enter, servants thrust her away, saying, "This is no home for the like of you."

"And, indeed, it cannot be, for to my home all who come are welcome," murmured the child, as she turned aside with tears in her eyes.

It was after one of these repulsions that a little bird, pursued by one larger, fluttered tremblingly into Lily's bosom for refuge. Pleased at the instinctive confidence of the little creature, she murmured tender and endearing words, and phrases unto it, like a mother would to a child trembling with fear. By degrees, overcoming its fright, the bird began to twitter and chirrup in response, and at length broke out into song full and joyous, its tiny throat swelling with the strains; and it seemed to Lily that the song of the bird, as it fell upon her ears, shaped itself into words—words which told of an unknown but beautiful land to which it was going when the summer was ended and the mists of autumn crept over the land, enshrouding its beauty and loveliness.

But the song did not say where this land was; it only spoke of its marvellous beauty, its warm sunshine, blue sky, green trees, and ripe fruits; it spoke of the hope which grew stronger and stronger, that one day it would fly there, enjoy all its pleasures, and tremble no more with fear, as large birds would lose all their cruelty.

"But where is this unknown land?" whispered the child, as the song ended.

Spreading its wings, the bird sung, "I know not, but am searching to find it," and flew away up into the blue depths of the sky.

Poor Lily wept for her bird, and turning aside from it, entered into a small plantation of oak trees,

where she rested herself; while the leaves murmured over her head, and seemed to wonder who she could be, and why she was sitting there. Looking up at them, the child said, "I wonder whether you have an unknown land of which to dream?"

"Certainly," answered the leaves; "a land where we shall never fade, and where to grow is a pleasure, and freedom from pain. There soft balmy breezes will blow upon us, and refresh us by their breath. The dew there will always fall silently upon us, and we, not the sun, shall drink it. There we shall always be young; decay, with its 'effacing fingers,' will never touch us again; birds will nestle in our branches, and fill them with music. We think of this land in the bright sunshine, and dream about it in the silent night."

"But where is it?" inquired the wondering child.

"We cannot say; we only know that there is such a land, towards which we are hastening."

The flowers at Lily's feet echoed the words of the leaves, breathed them forth again in fragrance, saying, "Yes, we too have an unknown land after which we sigh, where our beauty will increase, our colour will become more lovely, and our fragrance more subtle; there we shall yield more honey, and bees without stings will sip it from our cups; there no bitter east wind will wither us, and the icy breath of winter will not freeze us; there we shall never die, for it will be always summer."

"But where is your unknown land?" inquired the child.

"We cannot tell where, and yet we are sure there is one."

The waters of the brook close by, as they ran merrily over the white pebbles, took up the words of the flowers, saying, "Yes, we are hurrying away to an unknown land, where we shall laugh and sparkle more gaily than we do now, for brighter sunbeams will rest upon us, and we shall flow between more flowery banks than these; there tall, graceful trees will bend over to see themselves reflected in our silvery waters; there birds with gayer plumage will skim over our surface, and fish, silver and gold, will sport in our depths, while gentle-eyed deer will slake their thirst as we flow merrily on over our golden sands."

"But where is your unknown land?" inquired the child.

"We cannot tell; but follow us, we are hurrying there." And the waters laughed as they flowed past.

Then birds, and leaves, and flowers, and waters, all seemed to blend their words together, singing of the beauties of the unknown country to which they were all looking forward, and to which they were hastening with eager expectation and enjoyment.

Slowly Lily rose up from her mossy seat. She was tired and a little disenchanted with her search; her home appeared much farther off than when she first set

out on her travels; a little of hopelessness had crept into her heart; the song of the bird and flowers gave her no real knowledge about the unknown land, and when it could be reached; she had hoped that such lovely things as leaves, birds, and flowers, would certainly be able to give her correct information concerning her home, but instead they had only spoken of a country which seemed "*very far off.*"

Lily was too young to fully comprehend the importance of the lesson which had been imparted to her. What all those beautiful creations meant was, that the true home of the soul was not in NATURE; that flowers, and trees, and the fair gardens of earth only shadowed the more beautiful above them. Nature was transient and evanescent. The true home and resting-place of the soul was more lovely and enduring. Nature never gives rest and peace. Home means this.

Lily wandered on, pondering over what she had heard, until the shadows of evening again darkened the sky, when she laid herself down beneath the wide-spreading branches of a giant old oak, where, doubtless, many a wearied wanderer had rested, but surely never one so lovely and fragile as this. There she slept throughout the night, occasionally waking, when she would lie quietly watching the stars, until sleep again closed her eyes. The darkness and loneliness of her resting-place gave her no fear; no accusing voice of conscience whispered to

her; she was an innocent child, hence her unconscious fearlessness.

The majestic sun had commenced his daily journey, when Lily, just in that debatable land between sleeping and waking, fancied she heard a sweet plaintive voice singing:—

Little child sleeping,
  Why do you sleep?
Angels have vanished
  Up in the deep;
Sunbeams conveyed them
  Back to the sky,
Golden gates opened
  As they passed by;
All through sunny hours
  Silver wings rest,
Only by starlight
  Leave they their nest.

Little child sleeping,
  Open your eyes,
Stars have all vanished
  Out of the skies;
Sunbeams have frighten'd
  Darkness away,
Shadows are hiding
  Themselves for the day;
Out of their chambers
  Fresh breezes sigh,
White clouds are sailing
  Up in the sky.

Little child sleeping,
  Wake from your sleep,
Hid among green leaves
  Little birds peep;
Peep while they wonder,
  (Wonder and sing),
Down in the grasses
  To see a wee thing,
Lying and sleeping,
  'Gemm'd o'er with dew,
Sleeping and lying
  'Neath the broad blue.

Little child sleeping,
Open your eyes,
Flowers are nestling
Round with surprise;
Lilies are bending
With exquisite grace,
Daisies are peeping
To look in your face;
Harebell and foxglove
(Saucy young flowers)
Whisper, 'She's sleeping
Through bright sunny hours.'

Little child sleeping,
Open your eyes,
Spiders are weaving
Webs for the flies;
Bold, black, little ants,
Thinking it fair,
Are hunting for food
In your golden hair;
Brown humming bees,
Could they but speak,
Are thinking there's honey
On each little cheek.

Little child sleeping,
Wake from your sleep,
Home is not gained
Slumbering deep.
Nature awakens
Laughing and bright,
Golden her tresses,
Beaming with light;
Sun in the heavens
Travelling fast,
Soon on thy pathway
Shadows will cast.

This thoroughly aroused Lily. As soon as the song ceased she arose and searched round the immediate neighbourhood of the oak to ascertain from whom the song had proceeded; but her search was unavailing. Once or twice she thought she caught a glimpse of a

quickly receding dress among some bushes; but each time the supposed dress resolved itself into a gaily-coloured flower. Lily gave up her search, and commenced her journey, for the sun was climbing high in the heavens.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE ICE CHURCH.

WHEN the last beams of the sun were flushing the western sky with beauty, and tinging tree and flower with additional loveliness, weary and dusty with travel, and heart-sore with disappointment—not knowing that disappointment, sorrow, and labour are the great high-roads to ultimate good—Lily slowly approached a very ruinous-looking church, standing in the centre of a graveyard overrun with long, coarse grass and weeds. The stones at the head of many of the graves were discoloured and moss-covered; the path leading to the church was broken, and full of ruts and rank weeds.

As Lily neared the door of the church she perceived it was hanging on but one hinge; entering, she found in the chancel, and round about the communion-table, several specimens of fern and fungi. A glimpse of the blue sky could be obtained through various openings in the roof, while through the broken windows birds entered to their nests, which they had built in several parts of

the structure. A very dreary sort of building it appeared to the eyes of the child, nevertheless it was there she determined to seek rest for the night.

Her arrangements were soon made, and the "tired eyelids closed on tired eyes."

She knew not how long it was after she had fallen asleep, but some time during the night she began to dream; and in her dream she thought an angel appeared unto her, and, touching her, said, "Arise, and follow me."

And she arose and followed him, and he led her before a vast church; and she looked, and lo, and behold, the church was all ice! The walls were built up with solid blocks of ice, cemented together by snow, hardened into the consistency of ice; the windows were thin, transparent sheets of ice, and the roof laminated shales of ice; the spire was ice, and the cross which surmounted the spire was of ice likewise. The atmosphere which surrounded the church was intensely cold—so cold that Lily wondered whether the dead in their narrow resting-places were not made uneasy by it, and turned restlessly and impatiently because disturbed in their long, quiet slumbers by the icy fingers of cold.

Through the cold atmosphere the beams of the wintry sun shone upon the cross, and spire, and roof, and ew out a thousand scintillations of beautiful and ant colour, which dazzled the eyes of the beholder,

and lit up the imagination with conceptions of beauty, but fell coldly upon the human heart which loves and suffers.

Still following in the footsteps of her conductor, Lily entered the church,—the door of which was of ice, and swung back on ice hinges,—and walked up the chancel until she reached the stairs of the altar, which, strange to say, was like the rest of the church,—composed of ice. There her footsteps were arrested by the presence whom she followed, and turning round she surveyed the interior of the building, trembling the while with cold. And when she looked, she saw the church was filled by a vast throng of people, of all ages and conditions of life, from the little infant of a few days resting calmly in its mother's arms, to the hoar-headed patriarch bent double with years and infirmity.

There were beggars in their rags and dirt, and close by them the wealthy ones of the earth; yet from all the vast throng no sound proceeded, but amid the awful silence they bowed and knelt, spread out their hands, and raised their eyes up towards heaven, while their lips moved, but no sound proceeded therefrom. Clinging to corbel, and groin, beam and arch, appeared gauze-like clouds of mist, which resolved themselves into words of prayer, supplications, and petitions for mercy, but which could not ascend up to heaven, because the icy breath of the cold killed their warmth.

On the steps of the altar knelt a woman, who beat her hands upon her breast, the tumultuous heavings of which indicated that a storm of passionate despair was tearing her heart, while from her eyes gleamed an expression of intense desire for peace, mingled with the despairing light of hopelessness, while the man upon whose face they were hungrily fixed, clad in priestly vestments, waved his hands as though weaving a spell. But the frigid impassiveness of his gaze and features revealed no expression of answering sympathy to the mute appeal of the suffering woman, whose intense agony seemed of sufficient strength to have awoke emotion in a stone.

At the doors of the church, and peering in at the various windows, appeared the tearstained faces of repentant men and women, whose souls were soiled with the mire of sin and crime, but whose consciences had awoke, and who now, with tears, were seeking a place for repentance, and whose hearts were longing to return to that state of blissful peace they knew, when, as little children, they roamed in green meadows and said their prayers at their mothers' knees. But the coldness and the icy frigidity of those within turned them from the door, and waved them away from the windows, and they departed with wailings, finding no place for repentance.

Heedless of the despairing ones outside longing to

enter and find rest, the congregation still went on with its mockery of a service, satisfied with their own performances. Each one appeared, like the Pharisee of old, to consider himself, or herself, the chosen of the Lord and well pleasing in His sight. Not one smote upon the breast, saying, "God be merciful to me a sinner;" but each appeared to say, "Am I not better than this Publican, or those who are thronging to enter here with us, who are Thy well beloved?"

In language which seemed great to fall from the lips of a child, Lily turned to the presence by her side, burying her face in his shining robes, and, with sobs from her torn little heart, said—"Oh, angel, is this the Church of the living God and the true home of the weary-hearted ones of earth?"

Then the angel, taking the child up in his arms and hushing her sobs upon his breast, answered and said—"The Church of the Lord is the true home of the soul, and a shadow of the beautiful home hereafter; but she has departed from the living God, and is satisfied with the cold formalities of such a service as you have witnessed. The Church requires the brooding of the heavenly dove to break her icy bands asunder, awake her from her cold sleep of death into the warmth of the true life of love."

"My home!" sobbed the child, "shall I never gain it?"

"The way to it is through sorrow and pain," whispered the angel, as he glided behind the altar, where appeared a steep flight of stairs, up which he mounted, presently emerging out close to the cross which surmounted the spire, around which he threw one arm, still holding the child by the hand. Breathing on her eyes he bade her look, saying—"This also is the true Church of God."

And when Lily looked it appeared as though her eyes had received a wonderful accession of strength, for a most marvellous vision dawned upon her sight, the wonder of which made her heart pant and ache.

Before her, far as the eye could reach, appeared great and grand cities, replete with noble edifices, majestic buildings, and innumerable streets, thronged with people who were toiling, suffering, and sorrowing; the heart of many an one, as he toiled or suffered, seemed to breathe itself out in silent prayer, for strength to do his task, for power to endure his suffering, for courage to do what was right.

In houses mothers were seen soothing sick children, wives ministering to their husbands, and husbands to their wives, and children tending to the wants of aged parents; women were seen kneeling in prayer by the bed of the dying, others smoothing the pillows of the sick in crowded hospitals; some were comforting the mourner, and hushing the cries of desolated orphans,

binding up the broken in heart and the wounded in spirit, making the path pleasant for little feet, and smooth for the aged and infirm; many were lending a helping hand to the needy and those in distress, and speaking comforting words to those cast down and in despair through manifold temptations.

It was a sad sight to the eyes of Lily, because it revealed so much of sorrow and of suffering; but the tender love which sought to soothe and to heal was as the beautiful silver lining which relieved the darkness of the clouds.

As the eyes of the child became more accustomed to the sight, she discerned bright angels hovering over each one, noting down every kind word that was spoken, every unselfish action performed, every generous deed accomplished, and every heartfelt word of prayer breathed by the toiling and suffering throng; these angels were constantly returning to the skies with their petitions, and bringing back answers of peace, and rewards even for those who had only given the cup of cold water.

"Every toiling and suffering creature," said the angel, "who looks up to God for strength, every one who speaks a kind word, or performs a kind action in the name of Jesus, belongs to the grand universal Church of God, and shall gain his, or her, reward. Look yonder!"

And, looking up towards the sky where the angel pointed, Lily saw the streets of the golden city, with its

pearly gates, and palaces studded with precious stones, illumined with pure light, but not the light of the sun, or the moon, or of stars; and in the streets of the city she discerned the forms of many of those she had seen sorrowing and toiling in earthly cities, but no longer with tear-stained faces and pain-furrowed cheeks, but all glorious like the sons and daughters of kings.

"My beautiful home!" cried the child, stretching out her arms.

With a start, as though she were falling, Lily awoke, and behold it was a dream!

CHAPTER XIV.

HOME! HOME AT LAST!

AFTER the vision of the Golden City faded, search was weary work for Lily. Hungering to gain her home, she knew not in what direction to seek it; and hope deferred maketh the heart sick.

All who set out to find their home have to experience this; no ultimate good is ever attained but after much disappointment and sorrow. There are difficult roads to traverse, steep hills to climb, turbulent waters to cross, black darknesses to pass through; many faint and die on the road with the hardness of the struggle, many allow the difficulties to overcome them, not being able to rise superior to them; but great is the reward of those who persevere and hope, who never give in, who toil manfully and heroically until the end, when they receive the "well done."

But how many there are who stop short in their search, and never gain the end for which they set out. Some are satisfied to rest contented in the transitory happiness of home life here, who, when they are surrounded by the

comforts of domestic peace and plenty, think they have gained the greatest desire of life, and that for which life was given, forgetting altogether—or the mere shadow of a recollection passing across their minds—that one day they will awake from their dream, and all their household pleasures vanish like light before great darkness.

Some wander into the beautiful realms of nature, and are there content to remain, thinking and trying to believe there is nothing more beautiful beyond, no other good surpassing the bountifulness of nature, forgetting that nature is but a garment which will one day wax old, and crumble into dust, for the earth is to be consumed, and the heavens vanish like smoke, and nature be no more.

Others, again, pass beyond nature, and arrive at the portals of the Church, making it the end, and aim, and all of life, forgetting that it is only a means towards an end—an aid by which to mount to a higher and purer life, for the Church is but a symbol of God's great home, for which all souls are made.

Poor little Lily wandered on and on for days, not knowing whither she went, growing more and more weary every day. Sometimes tender-hearted women rested her for the night, wondering who the lovely child could be; some even wished to retain her, and would have had her regard herself as a welcome member of their own household; but to this she would never consent, not even to linger for a day. The desire to gain her home was too

strong to allow her to rest. She was always looking forward for the morrow, the present was too unrestful; the rest lay in some future she was striving to attain unto.

Once she found herself in the streets of a mighty city, about which she roamed all day, and when night spread its dark curtain over the streets she shed hopeless tears, for the tall houses oppressed her with a feeling that she was in a prison from which she should never be able to gain her freedom. She looked up at the stars, and wondered whether they were sad to see her imprisoned there. Then, too, she saw little children crouching in doorways for shelter, and women who had no homes pacing the dark streets; while the slouching, stealthy steps of several men made her shudder as though an evil presence had passed her by.

Many times throughout the night she heard voices raised in angry contention, and loud shrieks as of pain. All these things fell upon her sensitive heart like blows from a knife. She longed to flee away from it all and be once more in the open country, where birds sung, trees waved, and waters murmured; so she quickly left the crowded city, where she thought it difficult to breathe freely, and—

> "Wandered lonely as a cloud
> That floats on high o'er vales and hills."

But the beauty of summer was ending, the days growing shorter, and the nights more chill; flowers were fading, leaves turned from green to sober brown; swal-

lows were holding tumultuous and noisy gatherings to decide upon their route to warmer lands; trees were growing bare, while high winds drove clouds rapidly across the sky. Everything told Lily that summer was ended, and autumn at hand.

The child was approaching the end of her search; her little feet were very weary, and blistered with much travel, for her way had sometimes been over rough and stony ground, her path beset with thorns and briars. The toil of much walking, and insufficient food and rest, had worn her body very thin, and so fragile did she appear, that one who saw her thought a good stiff breath of wind would carry her away, whirling her hither and thither like a leaf.

At the close of an autumn day, feeling more tired than she had ever felt before, the heaviness and sadness of her heart seemed to have infused themselves into her limbs, so that it was painful to her to walk; she laid herself down to rest on a heap of brown crisp leaves, in her heart wishing she could lie there for ever resting in peace; the wind moaned through the bare tree tops, and clouds gathered up in the sky, huddling together in haste like flocks of frightened sheep. When the shadows deepened heavy dew began to fall, wetting the garments of the child and sending a cold chill through her frame.

As she lay with unclosed eyes, looking up into the sky, through a rift of dark clouds gleamed out the light

of a bright star, and to the child's eyes it seemed to open and expand into marvellous beauty; its long beams appeared like a pathway of silvery light, and at the entrance of the star stood shining forms of loveliness, whose countenances were beautiful to behold, being radiant with happiness. Down the silvery pathway came floating strains of delightful music, which fell like soothing words upon the heart of the child. And as she continued to gaze, as though in a dream, it seemed, and her heart throbbed at the thought, that the shining forms were beckoning to her, as though they wished her to go to them; and to her excited fancy they stretched out their arms to receive her, whispering, "Home! home!" And again, "Home, gained at last! Wanderings all ended; rest, rest at last!"

Raising her arms, the child cried, "I come, I come! My beautiful home at last!" But in the very act of raising her arms the vision faded from her sight, dark clouds blotting out the light of the star. After which Lily lay very quiet.

When morning dawned, the wind, which had been high throughout the night, blew more gently, letting the leaves and the clouds have a little rest. Some men, on their way to their daily labour, found, lying beneath a tree, and partly covered with withered leaves, a beautiful young creature, whom they thought was sleeping, but when they spoke to her they found she did not awake

and answer them, and drawing still nearer to the silent form, they were startled and shocked to find she was dead, and unable to answer any more questions, although wiser than the wisest of those who questioned her, for—

"An hour matures;
You can teach her nothing else.
She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid,
By those eyelids, pale and close,
Now she knows what Rameses knows.
Cross her quiet hands and smooth
Down her patient locks of silk,
Cold and passive. . . .
But her lips you cannot wring
Into saying a word more,
'Yes,' or 'No,' or such a thing."

In a sequestered corner of a quiet country churchyard the little body was laid to rest, where the early sunbeams would play upon her grave, and violets and daisies bloom in early spring months.

No one knew how it was she died out there beneath the light of autumn stars.

Dead! No; Lily had only found her BEAUTIFUL HOME!

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